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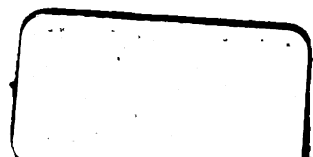
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L. Bennett

from

J. H. Wetters

1869.



THE  
SPEECHES  
OF  
THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.  
DELIVERED IN  
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

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WITH A GENERAL EXPLANATORY INDEX,  
AND A  
BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF THE VARIOUS SUBJECTS ON WHICH  
THE SPEECHES WERE DELIVERED.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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THE SPEECHES  
OF  
THE RIGHT HON.  
SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.

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SPAIN—THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

MARCH, 14, 1842.

SIR ROBERT PEEL (in reply to some questions put by Mr. Sheil, as to whether the Earl of Aberdeen had written to Madrid, expressing his concurrence in the proceedings of the French government, in reference to the course it had pursued with regard to the presentation of M. Salvandy's credentials, and whether, if the noble earl had acted in that manner, he had afterwards expressed any different opinion) stated that he cordially concurred with the right hon. gentleman, in lamenting that any necessity should arise for making reference in that House to debates and discussions in popular assemblies in other countries. In order that he might properly explain the course pursued by the British government, with respect to the matter alluded to by the right hon. gentleman, it would be necessary for him to enter a little into detail. Whatever opinion the government might have entertained or expressed on the subject, it had not had the slightest practical influence on the course pursued by the Spanish government with reference to M. Salvandy. That government had taken its course on its own sense of duty before the opinion of the British government was received at Madrid. The question was then disposed of, and therefore the expression of the opinion of the British government had had no practical bearing on it. M. Salvandy, the French ambassador at Madrid, was accredited by the King of the French to Queen Isabel. The British government heard with great regret that, at a critical period, a difference of opinion was likely to arise between the governments of France and Spain, that might lead to the interruption of all diplomatic intercourse. The British government, therefore, felt it to be their duty, actuated by a sincere feeling of interest in the affairs of Spain, to tender their advice to the Spanish government with respect to that possible cause of difference. There had recently been in Spain an attempt on the palace of the Queen—an attempt to seize her Majesty's person. There had been considerable excitement and disturbance in some of the provinces of Spain. The sense—the deliberate sense, in his opinion—of the people of Spain, was in favour of the existing government, and this had given energy to the government, and enabled them entirely to suppress those attempts. The British government, however, thought it would be unfortunate for Spain if, shortly after this excitement, the diplomatic intercourse between France and Spain should be suspended. The British government had very recently made proposals to the northern courts, particularly to Austria, earnestly recommending that they should recognise the existing government of Spain, for the purpose of giving stability to that government, and, through that, to encourage the people to apply themselves to those pursuits of industry and ordinary occupations of life, for which a state of tranquillity was so favourable; and the British government entertained serious apprehensions that if

there should be, on the ground on which they feared it might take place, an interruption of the diplomatic relations between France and Spain, their efforts to procure the recognition of the existing government might fail. The British government, therefore, expressed an opinion to the government of Spain, that it might be possible to reconcile this difference. The question arose on the 59th article of the constitution, which declared that the regent should exercise all the authority of king, in whose name the acts of government should be published. The British government suggested to the government of Spain, that it might be possible that an arrangement of the following nature should be made, which should reserve to the regent of Spain the whole of the authority which that constitution intended to devolve on him, and yet respect the royal dignity in a matter which the British government thought right to consider one of ceremony and etiquette rather than of a substantial character. The British government, therefore, suggested an arrangement of this nature:—M. Salvandy being accredited to the queen, and not to the regent, the British government proposed that the letters, of which M. Salvandy was the bearer, should be delivered to the queen in the presence of the regent; but that any act of authority connected with the reply to those letters should be performed by the regent, and that any answer delivered in the name of the queen should be delivered by the regent. The course thus suggested was somewhat similar to that pursued in the cases of Greece and of Brazil, when the sovereigns were minors. In the case of Greece, letters of credence were delivered to the infant sovereign in the presence of the regent, and handed by the king to the regent. In the case of Brazil, the regent issued a decree, requiring the letters of credence of foreign ambassadors to be delivered to him in the absence of the king. This assumption on his part was resisted by the courts which had accredited ministers to Brazil, and an arrangement was made, by which, in that case, the letters were delivered to the regent in the presence of the king. But before the advice tendered by the British government could be received by the Spanish government, the latter acted on their own construction of the constitution of Spain. He believed that, in giving that construction to the article of the constitution, they acted with perfect sincerity. The government, and he believed the Cortes, resolved, that it was inconsistent with the constitution that the queen should receive the letters of credence, and even that acts of ceremony should be performed by the regent. The British government never questioned the perfect right of the Spanish government to place its own construction on the constitution; and, as he had before stated, the Spanish government had given its construction and acted upon it, before the advice of the British government had reached Madrid. The British government had suggested a different construction of the article of the constitution, solely from a sincere desire to promote the welfare of Spain, and because they were apprehensive of those results which had subsequently taken place; but they never questioned the perfect right of the Spanish government and authorities to decide the question for themselves. They were the supreme authority on the point, and the advice of the British government was offered before the construction of the article of the constitution by the Spanish authorities was known. With the construction given by them to their own constitution no other party had a right to quarrel; but the opinion of the British government had never changed on this subject. He knew not on what authority the right hon. gentleman opposite said, that Senor Gonzales had stated that there had been a change in the opinion expressed by the British government with respect to the construction of the article, that the act of ceremony on receiving the credentials might be performed by the queen. This was the suggestion offered by the British government, in ignorance of the interpretation that might have been put on it by the Spanish authorities, and the report—a newspaper report, he believed, of an allegation said to be made by Senor Gonzales, that the opinion of the British government had undergone a change, was without foundation and incorrect. Having given this answer to the right hon. gentleman, and admitting that he had drawn a just distinction with reference to his question, he trusted that the House would in future abstain, as far as possible, from referring to what transpired in angry debates either in the Cortes or the Chamber of Deputies; for nothing had a greater tendency to excite constant recriminations.

After a short conversation the subject dropped.

## CORN BILL.—BURDENS ON LAND.

MARCH, 14, 1842.

The order of the day was read for the House to go into committee on the Corn-importation bill. On the question being put, that the Speaker do now leave the chair, Mr. Ward proposed the following motion:—"That a select committee be appointed, to inquire whether there are any peculiar burdens that specially affect the landed interest of this country, or any exemptions enjoyed by that interest, and to ascertain their nature and extent."

SIR R. PEEL: I wish, Sir, to call the attention of the House to the time at which, and the circumstances under which, the motion of the hon. gentleman opposite is made. This is, I believe, the fourteenth night, we have been kept in discussion upon the Corn-law, and as yet we have not been allowed to go into committee. There are some hon. members on the opposite side of the House who differ from this bill, who object to the principles of this bill, who are adverse to the details of this bill, and yet who—seeing the large majorities by which it has been affirmed in this House, and considering that the sense of the House has been fairly and fully taken,—considering, also, that the trade of the country in general, and the corn-trade in particular, is affected and embarrassed by continual delay—seeing, also, that this bill is admitted to be a great improvement of the law, seeing that it is admitted to be a considerable mitigation of the existing evils, derived from the present state of the law—have come to the conclusion, consistently and most wisely as I think, that the sense of the House having been so unequivocally manifested, the sooner the advantages of the bill are reaped the better. The question for them to consider is, whether there be any prospect of overruling the sense of the majority of this House, and if there be not, whether, upon a comparison of evils and advantages, it is wise to go on with a protracted, and in the end, useless discussion. The hon. member had the whole of last session to consider his proposal: he knew the Corn-law must come under discussion, he had full and ample opportunity for proposing his committee, yet he permits us to have thirteen nights of discussion, five of which were upon a subject identical with the present—the preference of an absolute repeal over the proposal of the government—and yet, on the fourteenth night, the hon. gentleman comes forward and proposes, that the whole proceeding on the Corn-law be suspended, until his committee shall have made their report. What I call upon the hon. gentleman to do is, to adhere to his own notice. The object of giving these notices was not to mislead. The object is to instruct the House, and to inform it of the nature of the motion which it is intended to bring forward. But here the hon. gentleman, who has been spending his time in ransacking hustings speeches—who has been looking over all the debates of 1834, after thirteen nights of debate, with the country expecting that the House will at last decide what is to be the law regulating the importation—here the hon. gentleman comes down and occupies our time, not with reference to the existing debate, but with a recitation and comparison of all that the Duke of Buckingham has said, all that I have said, and all that other persons have said, in the year 1834. And this, the hon. gentleman thinks, will satisfy the impatience of the country! This, he thinks, will afford a gratification to the people, who are anxious to have the question settled and the law determined! He satisfies the country and gratifies the people, not by discussing the question properly before the House, but by leisurely reviewing the proceedings which took place six or seven years ago. I ask the hon. gentleman, who has given so much time and attention to this subject, at least to make up his mind as to what his motion shall be. I came down to the house to-night, expecting that he would, at all events, adhere to the motion of which he had given notice. That notice of motion, no doubt, is a perfectly legitimate and fair one. It was in these terms:—"On the motion that Mr. Speaker do leave the chair to go into committee on the Corn-importation bill, to move, That it is inexpedient to impose any duty upon the importation of foreign corn, until this House shall have inquired whether there are any special burdens peculiarly affecting the landed interest of this country, or any special exemptions enjoyed by that interest, and shall have ascertained their nature and extent."

According to that motion, the issue fairly brought before us is this—shall the



Corn-importation bill be postponed till this committee which the hon. gentleman would appoint shall have concluded its inquiries and made its report? I ask the hon. gentleman to stand by his own notice, and bring that question to issue. I ask him to claim leave of the House to withdraw the motion with which he concluded his speech, and adhere to that of which he gave notice. Let me understand, as I have a right to understand, whether the House of Commons is now of opinion that the Corn-importation bill shall be pursued to its completion, or whether it shall be suspended indefinitely, until the hon. gentleman's committee shall have reported. I ask the noble lord who sits on the hon. gentleman's right hand, whether it be not consistent with the usages of parliament, that I should ask the hon. gentleman to adhere to the motion of which notice was given upon the paper? The hon. gentleman originally gave notice for the appointment of a committee. It was competent to him to renew that notice. But, instead of doing so, he alters the terms of his motion, and expressly joins issue with me, as to whether I will assent to the appointment of a committee, or take the sense of the House upon the question, that no Corn-law shall pass until a committee of inquiry shall have reported as to the existence or non-existence of any special burdens upon the land. I say that, consistently with fairness, and with all the usages of parliament, he ought to bring forward the motion of which he gave notice. He had ample time to consider his course, and determine what it should be before he placed his notice upon the order paper. It is something perfectly novel for the hon. gentleman to give a specific notice of motion—not to offer one word of intimation to those opposite to him of his intention to change that motion—to make the whole of his speech without saying that he had altered his mind, and then, at the close of a long address, quietly to put into the hands of the Speaker, not the motion which the House, from his notice, expected from him, but another motion of a very different character. I will not now stop to inquire whether, in this stage of our proceedings, it is fitting or not that a committee should be appointed to consider this question. But this I say, that I for one will not consent to a suspension of the Corn-importation bill until such a committee shall have been appointed, and have made its report. I separate the question of the fitness or unfitness of appointing a committee, from the question of whether this bill shall be suspended or not suspended. The appointment of a committee, considered by itself, may be proper or not proper, but I maintain it is not proper if adopted for the purpose of suspending this bill. Depend upon it, you will not carry public opinion and public favour with you, in the attempt to pursue this course of obstruction and delay. You knew last session of the intention of the government to deal with this question. I never taunted the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) for not stating exactly what were the burdens upon the land which he regarded as a justification of his proposal for placing a fixed duty of 8s. upon the importation of foreign corn. What I said was this, that the noble lord would labour under the same difficulty as I did, in specifying the exact amount of burden upon the land, in consideration of which he proposed to give a protection of 8s. I was challenged to show why a maximum of 20s. was necessary to protect the landed interest. I said, that that objection would apply with equal force to any specific amount of protection that might be proposed, whether fixed or graduated. I rested the claims of the land to protection, not upon its peculiar burdens alone, but upon other grounds. I said, that protection to the produce of the soil had been afforded for the last 150 years—that large capital had been invested on land under that system of protection—and that nothing, therefore, in my opinion, could be more unwise, than to risk the disturbance of the interests embarked in agriculture, by the sudden withdrawal of the protection which had so long been afforded to them, under which the existing relations of society had, in a great degree, been formed, and in reliance upon which, so much wealth had been directed to the cultivation of the soil. You have a perfect right to differ from me in that view, and to tell me, that my opinions are mistaken. I said, that another ground for affording protection was, to insure the cultivation of the land, and such a growth of domestic produce, as should prevent the risk, the imminent risk, as I thought, if all protection were discontinued, of placing the country in a position of entire, unqualified dependence upon foreign countries for a supply of corn. To make insurance against such a calamity, I said, I thought it necessary to continue protection to a certain extent to our domestic agriculture.

I said, also, that I firmly believe, that there are special and peculiar burdens affecting the land, as compared with the other great interests of the country. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Ward) scoffs at the notion of tithes being a burden upon the land, and expresses his astonishment, that any man on this side of the House should be weak and absurd enough to suppose, that tithes have really anything to do with the burdens borne by the landed interest. The hon. gentleman may be a very great authority upon matters of political economy, but I must observe, that there are others, nearly equal to him, perhaps, who have entertained a very different opinion upon this question of tithes and their relation to the land. They wrote, perhaps, in times comparatively barbarous, and their names, perhaps, may not be so eminent as that of the hon. member; but Adam Smith, for one, expressly declares, that he regards tithes as constituting a burden upon the land. The superior intelligence of the hon. gentleman may induce him to discard the notion, and to discard it with contempt; but Adam Smith was certainly weak enough to look upon tithes as a burden upon the soil. Adam Smith expresses himself in these words:—"Taxes upon the produce of land are, in reality, taxes upon the rent; and, though they may be originally advanced by the farmer, are finally paid by the landlord. When a certain portion of the produce is to be paid away for a tax, the farmer computes, as well as he can, what the value of this portion is, one year with another, likely to amount to; and he makes a proportionable abatement in the rent which he agrees to pay to the landlord. There is no farmer who does not compute beforehand what the church tithe, which is a land-tax of this kind, is, one year with another, likely to amount to."

But the hon. gentleman says—"There has been a commutation of tithes of late years, which alters the whole question, because formerly, the amount of tithe was uncertain, and varying from year to year, according to the quantity of produce, whereas, it is now comparatively fixed and certain: therefore, whatever the opinion in former times may have been, it is now clear, that tithes no longer constitute a burden upon the land."

It may be so, but Adam Smith differs from the hon. gentleman upon this point also, for Adam Smith distinctly says:—"When, instead either of a certain portion of the produce of the land, or of the price of a certain portion, a certain sum of money is to be paid, in full compensation for all tax or tithe, the tax becomes, in this case, exactly of the same nature with the land-tax of England. It neither rises nor falls with the rent of the land. It neither encourages nor discourages improvement. The tithe, in the greater part of those parishes which pay what is called a modus in lieu of all other tithe, is a tax of this kind."

I must say, when in any country you throw the whole burden, or the great part of the burden, of maintaining the Established Church, upon the land, if you collect that burden by an uncertain rate, varying with the produce of the soil, it acts, no doubt, as a greater discouragement to agriculture, than if it were commuted to a modus or fixed sum. It is clear that the commutation of such an uncertain tax as tithe, into a fixed and definite sum, must operate as a great benefit to the land—a great encouragement to the improved cultivation of the soil, and an increased stimulant to the application of capital to the purposes of agriculture. I do not deny that; but I say, that Adam Smith and Mr. Ricardo, both of them, distinctly declare, that they consider tithes a burden upon the land. There cannot be a question as to what the opinions of those writers were upon the point. Mr. Ricardo says:—"If the importation price of wheat was 60s. a quarter in England, and it was 60s. a quarter on the Continent, and, in consequence of the burden of tithes, wheat was raised in England to 70s. a quarter, a duty of 10s. ought also to be imposed on the importation of foreign corn."

These were the opinions of Mr. Ricardo. They may be entirely wrong, but they certainly differ very much from those of the hon. gentleman. Don't let the hon. gentleman suppose, that three or four days will settle this question in committee. I am not now saying, whether it may be proper or not to appoint a committee for the purpose of inquiring into the burdens of the land; but this I may say, that as far as I have had any communication with the landed interest, they have evinced no apprehensions as to the result of such an inquiry as that proposed in the hon. gentleman's original notice of motion. I confine myself to that original motion, because it is the

only one that the hon. gentleman can properly bring under the notice of the House. The landed interest, as far as I have communicated with them, have not told me, that they thought it essential to their interests that inquiry into the nature and extent of the peculiar burdens borne by them should be absolutely precluded; but I assure the hon. gentleman, that such an inquiry would be of rather longer continuance than he appears to think. Coming here himself, and laying down his dicta as an authority upon the subject, he will be met by others who may differ from him, and whose opinions, though opposed to his own, may yet be regarded as worthy of some consideration. I for one am not prepared to be governed by all the conclusions at which the hon. gentleman has arrived upon this subject. The question, "What is the exact amount of the special burden imposed upon the land?" is in my estimation an extremely difficult one upon which to form an accurate opinion. It is a question which, according to my view of it, must be determined rather upon general reasoning, than upon the positive dicta of any twelve or fifteen gentlemen who may be formed into a committee to consider of it. Tithe, church-rates, in short, pretty nearly the whole of the maintenance of the Established Church, is imposed upon the land. I do not deny that, in towns, a very considerable sum is raised towards the support of the church in the form of church-rates; but, upon the whole, I cannot help thinking that the land pays a very full proportion of the amount which is levied generally for the payment of church-rates. That, of course, would be one subject of inquiry before a committee. Another subject of inquiry would be, how the stock and profits of trade were now allowed to escape the payment of poor-rates? Because there can be no doubt that the original policy of the law was, that stock in trade and the profits of trade should contribute equally with the land to the support of the poor. It was found so difficult, however, to collect a fair and proper quota of the rate from stock-in-trade and the profits of trade, that you passed, not many months since, an act directly at variance with the original object of the law, relieving trade from this contribution to the poor-rates, and, of course, placing the burden upon the land. I believe that of late years there has been a more equal apportionment of the poor-rate; but if I take the whole of the contribution now made for relief of the poor, I think I shall still find, I do not say in what proportion, but certainly that a very large proportion of it is levied upon the land. I do not think that my hon. friend meant to insist upon it, that the return of 1826 afforded an exact view of the relative proportion in which the different interests of the country contributed to this burden at the present moment. But I will tell you what the relative proportion was in 1826. The proportion levied from the land in that year was £4,523,000; from dwelling-houses, £1,788,000; from mills, factories, &c., £255,000. As I said before, I do not quote this as an exact indication of what the proportion is now; but I still think, if you refer to the original policy of the act of Elizabeth, you will find that the sum contributed from other sources is proportionately far less than that contributed by the land. Looking to other burdens that bear upon the land, I know that there are many, who contend, and to a certain extent their argument is true, that these burdens are borne, not by the land itself, but by the consumer of the produce derived from the land. This argument has been specially applied to the article of barley. The revenue derived from barley, including the malt-tax and the duty upon spirits, may be taken at £10,000,000 a-year. I know that the consumer pays a very large proportion of that amount of taxation; but I know also that in manufactures the doctrine is this: if you have a duty upon any particular article of manufacture, you diminish the consumption of that particular article. I am constantly told (and I am going to act upon the principle in some degree), "reduce the duty upon any article of great consumption, and the consumption of that article will increase." True; and if I were to reduce the duty on barley, I should, no doubt, promote the consumption of it; but what I contend is this: if I levy a duty amounting to nearly £10,000,000 a-year upon one particular article of agricultural produce, although it is perfectly true that a considerable proportion of that duty is borne by the consumer, yet it is difficult to estimate what proportion falls upon the consumer, and what proportion upon the land. It would be most difficult to determine where the land ceases, and where the consumer begins, to pay this tax. I say, then, that I cannot prove to you, as you call upon me to do, what is the exact and precise amount of the special burdens imposed upon the land.

It would require a wiser man even than the hon. member for Sheffield, to perform such a duty. Admitting that commerce, to a certain extent, may be injured by the protection given to land, yet if a minister, whose the justice of continuing that protection, is called upon to state precisely what he conceives to be the particular and special burdens which render such a protection justifiable, he will find himself in a very embarrassing and difficult situation. You say, "If these special burdens exist, define them—specify them—let us know what they are." I tell you that that is very difficult, and after all the research of a committee, I believe it would be very difficult still. These are the general impressions under which I speak; but they are distinct considerations from the present question, which is this, shall I postpone indefinitely the Corn-importation bill, until the committee proposed by the hon. gentleman shall have made its report? Perhaps the hon. gentleman will say, "I only propose a committee, and if the landed interest, as you say, are not afraid of inquiry, why should that committee be opposed?" It is true that the hon. gentleman, in his original notice of motion, pointed only to the appointment of a committee, but in his speech of this evening he talks of that committee as a necessary preliminary to the passing of the Corn-importation bill; and speaking of the labours of the committee, supposing it to be appointed, he says, "It may be a very tedious business." Foreseeing this, I ask the House to decide upon the question before it, as practical men, acquainted with the interests and feelings of the country. I ask what the country would think of me, if I were to say to the hon. gentleman, "I think this is a very reasonable motion." I have been for a long time considering, not this question only, but all the questions which I brought forward the other night, connected with the finance and commerce of the country. I have endeavoured to suggest, with respect to all of them, as fair and practical a settlement as I could. What would the country think of me, if I now said, "Here is a very plausible motion for inquiry, brought forward by the hon. member for Sheffield? I will leave the corn trade, I will leave the landowners, the tenantry, all men who derive their income from the sale of corn or the production of corn, in a state of utter uncertainty, and go with the hon. member for Sheffield into an inquiry which may possibly terminate some three sessions hence." I leave it to the country to decide whether my objection to the hon. gentleman's motion is not a reasonable one. To that motion I shall certainly give my decided opposition.

The motion was negatived by a majority of 115, and the House went into committee, several clauses were agreed to, and the House resumed.

## INCOME TAX—MACHINERY.

MARCH 15, 1842.

Mr. F. T. Baring submitted a series of questions, relative to the machinery to be employed in the collection of the proposed Income-tax.

SIR R. PEEL: Sir, the right hon. gentleman has put to me seven questions, to which he requires an answer. As I stated to the House, I shall bring forward a measure embracing the general principles which I have already disclosed, and on which the present government proposes to found a bill for the purpose of supplying the enormous deficiency which has been occasioned by the disproportion which has been suffered to accrue between the revenue and expenditure. In the bill for raising the property-tax, there are about 218 clauses; and the right hon. gentleman thinks it convenient for me to state, in answer to his question, what is the general purport of those clauses. Consistently with my public duty, I do not feel I could give an answer to the right hon. gentleman, without entering into explanations which cannot be properly made in replying to a single question, or a series of questions. The House, I am sure, must feel, that it is extremely difficult for any one who labours under the responsibility of proposing a great measure to parliament, and upon which it is of the utmost importance that the intentions of the government should be kept perfectly secret, as regards its operation on the commercial and manufacturing interests, to disclose the principal provisions of his scheme in an imperfect shape

before parliament. The records of whole proceedings of the old property-tax commissioners were destroyed by a vote of this House. Almost all the officers employed under it, have ceased to exist. I do not deny the importance of the matter to which the right hon. gentleman's question applies, and I think the machinery under the proposed tax a question of grave consideration. But it is the first privilege, as I hold it, of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, to have an opportunity of explaining in detail the provisions of an all-important measure of this nature. It is perfectly open to the right hon. gentleman to debate this question on Friday; but I do not think it fitting that I should explain, in answer to a mere question, what are the general provisions of a bill, so complicated as one for levying a tax of this nature must be, I must, therefore, beg leave to decline answering the question of the right hon. gentleman.

In reply to Viscount Howick, Sir R. Peel said, that the noble viscount and every hon. gentleman would have the fullest opportunity, during the progress of the bill, of discussing the matter, if the machinery should appear to them unsatisfactory, or so unsatisfactory as to constitute a fatal objection to the measure. Acceding to the preliminary resolution would not bind the noble viscount to support every part of the bill. He was sure the House would not expect, in reference to a bill which might contain about 218 clauses, any member should be bound to all the details. He would, at the earliest period, whenever there was an opportunity of entering into an explanation (but not in answer to a question), state to the House the general principle on which he proposed the machinery should be constructed. He would do so when he had an opportunity of replying to the comments that might be made by various hon. gentlemen, but not when he was limited to a mere answer to a question. He apprehended, that Mr. Pitt made his explanations in the committee on the bill, and not in answer to questions. The right hon. gentleman would be at perfect liberty to ask for details on Friday next; but how was it possible for him to enter into explanations of the sort required, in answer to the right hon. gentleman's seven questions, as to who were to be the commissioners, what powers they were to exercise, what officers of excise or other department were to collect the tax, what powers each were to have, and so forth?

Conversation at an end.

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## THE INCOME TAX.

MARCH 18, 1842.

The House having resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means.—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows:—I can assure the noble lord (Lord John Russell) that the notice he has given, of his intention to offer a determined opposition to my proposal, has not in the slightest degree disappointed or disconcerted me. Notwithstanding the silence of the other night—notwithstanding the calmness with which my proposition was received—notwithstanding the declaration that my proposal should be considered as a whole, I felt, that in the attempt to meet the difficulties in which this country had been involved by the financial administration of the late government, I felt, that whatever efforts I might make, whether by the continuance of loans, whether by the imposition of taxes upon the income and property of the country, whether by burdens upon the working classes, by means of taxes on articles of consumption, I had not undertaken an easy task; but I was confident that my chief opponents would be those who had involved the country in difficulties. But you (speaking to the opposition) shall not divert the attention of the country from the real point at issue. This is no question of *Eau de Cologne*; this is no question of colonial asses. Never did I see the right hon. gentleman (Mr. F. Baring) so much excited as he was upon that subject. The right hon. gentleman never felt half the indignation at the financial difficulties of the country that he exhibited at the imposition of a differential duty upon colonial asses as compared to foreign asses. He contemplated with the calmness of a philosopher, year by year, an increasing deficiency in the public finances; but, to propose a differential duty of 3d.

upon a colonial ass, excited the right hon. gentleman to a pitch of indignation. But the question to be considered is this—the financial administration of the country and of India having been, for five or six years, in the hands of hon. gentlemen opposite, in what position is the country placed? The time has arrived (again speaking to the opposition) when your tampering with saving-banks, and with 5 per cent. upon Customs duties, must be abandoned, and some decided and vigorous effort must be made to equalise the income and expenditure of the country. You say that you will submit to future and onerous taxation, when you are convinced of its necessity, in order to produce that equalisation. Well, upon the actual expenditure you will be called to make in the course of this year, there is a deficit of £3,000,000. It has become necessary, since I last addressed the House on this subject, to send additional reinforcements to India, in consequence of the policy you have pursued with regard to that country; and it will be my duty, in order to adopt the measures which are requisite for vindicating the honour of the British arms, to propose to parliament increased military estimates, in addition to those which I have already submitted. The actual deficit is £2,570,000. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. F. Baring) has seemed delighted at an error he supposed he had discovered in my estimate. The right hon. gentleman said he had been fishing, and that he had fished with great success, and he informed me that he was about to offer me a large sum, of which I was not aware. The right hon. gentleman said I had calculated an actual deficiency of £2,569,000, while he had discovered that it would only amount to £2,469,000, making a difference of £100,000; and he taunted me with my arithmetical inaccuracy in exhibiting such a blunder in my calculations. This sum of £100,000 I thought it necessary to provide, though I could not enter much into detail on the subject, to meet any deficiency which might arise on special emergency. But I must deprive myself of the consolation which the right hon. fisherman has offered me, for I will venture to say, that the result will be, that I shall have an actual deficiency to provide for to the amount of £3,000,000. I presume that a provident man, in calculating his expenditure for the year, will take into account, not merely the actual payments for which he has to provide, but any special expenses he may be called upon to meet. I said, therefore, that I calculated the cost of the expedition to China—which, in pursuance of the policy of the late government, we have undertaken to carry on, I trust, even with additional vigour—I calculated the cost of that expedition, for the year ending April, 1843, would be, at the very least, £1,300,000. I proposed merely to include in the estimates a vote of £500,000, because, I thought it might only be necessary to provide for the actual payment of that amount in the course of the present year; but £800,000 of expenditure is thus left unprovided for, and add that sum, supposing the actual deficit should amount, not to £2,570,000, but to £3,000,000 in the course of the year, to the amount which must be demanded for the service of the ensuing year, and you bring up the clear net deficiency to £3,800,000. I think that estimate will not be questioned. How, then, is this deficiency to be supplied? All appear to concur in opinion that it ought to be provided for by an addition to the revenue of the country. Sir, I wish, in the face of that deficiency, to incur a further deficiency. I wish, for the sake of public policy, for the sake of removing burdens which press upon the springs of manufacturing industry and commercial enterprise, to add to the existing deficiency. If it be politic to abolish altogether prohibitions—if it be politic to reduce prohibitory duties—if it be politic to mitigate the duties upon certain articles of consumption, and upon certain raw materials which enter into every commercial enterprise—I allude to such articles as timber—and if that policy be approved of and adopted, a fresh addition, must be made to the deficit of the year of from £1,000,000 to £1,200,000, leaving, therefore, a total deficiency of revenue, as compared with expenditure, for the ensuing year, of not less than £4,800,000. I explained to the House, on a former occasion, the mode in which I propose to meet this deficiency. I propose to levy a tax upon the income of the country—upon the income of persons, all of whom I cannot call rich, but the greater number of whom are in comparatively easy circumstances, and this tax upon the property and income of the country will produce the sum of about £3,700,000. If my facts be admitted as to the extent of the deficiency—if the policy of removing prohibitions, of mitigating prohibitory duties, and of reducing the

amount of duty upon certain great articles of commerce, be allowed, the deficiency thus produced must be met in some manner; and the question at issue between the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) and myself—the question which will decide the financial policy, as it will decide the fate of the government—is, whether my advice, or that of the noble lord shall be taken—whether I shall be permitted to make this attempt to relieve the country from embarrassment, or whether the financial affairs of the nation shall be restored to the hands of those who are responsible for the difficulties by which we are surrounded. How does the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) propose to raise this deficiency of £4,800,000? He says, that if I had proposed any other tax, I should have had his cordial support. Does the tax upon coals afford me any striking indication of that cordial acquiescence, when the noble lord has stated, that I may not only expect his determined opposition to the Income-tax, but also to the tax upon coals? The right hon. gentleman opposite, (Mr. F. Baring) has questioned the policy of increasing the tax on spirits, and has said, that he entertains opinions most adverse to such a measure. How I shall fare with regard to the stamp duties in Ireland, I know not; but I see a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Sheil) preparing for opposition to that branch of my proposal. [Mr. Shiel: I said nothing.] It is some consolation to know that the right hon. gentleman does not threaten me with opposition; but I do not think, from the indications I have perceived, that I have a right to entertain very sanguine anticipations, that if, instead of resorting to a tax on the income of the country, I had revived the tax upon leather, or salt, or any of the articles from which duties have been removed, I should have received very cordial support from hon. gentlemen opposite. The noble lord (Lord J. Russell) has intimated, that he will submit resolutions to the House in opposition to my measure. Those resolutions will, of course, involve the consideration of the Corn-laws and of the sugar duties. The noble lord will again propose his fixed duty on corn, as a means of raising the public revenue; and it will be for the House to determine, whether they will adopt the principle of the property-tax, or impose a fixed duty of 8s., or a lower amount, upon corn, in order to improve the finances of the country. Those right hon. gentlemen who are political supporters of the noble lord, and who tell me, that by the scale of duties I propose, I am ruining Irish agriculture, and destroying the hopes of the growth of oats in Ireland, will have to decide whether they prefer the noble lord's scheme to that which I contemplate, for the noble lord proposes to reduce the protective duty upon Irish produce, below that which it now enjoys, anticipating a supply of revenue from a fixed duty on corn. With respect to sugar, I admit that it is a subject perfectly open to consideration. The noble lord will be acting in consistency with the opinions he has before expressed, if he proposes a reduction of the duty on foreign sugar, in the hope that a revenue may be derived from that source. What other suggestions the noble lord may make for improving the revenue of the country, I cannot conceive. I am not a little surprised at the course which has been pursued with respect to the reduction I propose to make in the timber duties. I certainly thought it was a prevailing opinion on the opposite side of the House, that there was no more onerous impost than that upon foreign timber. It has been argued that the result of that impost is not merely to diminish the supplies from the countries on the shores of the Baltic—not merely to prevent us from availing ourselves of an extensive market for a considerable portion of our manufactures, but it has also been contended, I believe, that the operation of the tax is to give a preference to inferior timber, as compared with good, and to lead to the purchase of a comparatively bad article at a high price. The proposal I make is, to attach a nominal duty to Canadian timber, and to make as great a reduction in the duties on foreign timber imported into this country as is consistent with a just protection to the produce of our own dominions. The loss of revenue, I have no doubt, will be considerable; but I reconcile myself to that loss from the conviction that when you deal with articles of extensive consumption, or the raw materials of manufacture, it is on the whole good policy to make such a reduction as will insure to the consumer the full benefit of that reduction. I have read treatises on this subject, edited by hon. gentlemen attached to the principles of the noble lord opposite (Lord J. Russell), who have held office in connection with the party by which the noble lord is supported, and who have always been considered high

authorities in reference to financial and commercial matters. I certainly think that the publications of Sir Henry Parnell are, on many points, entitled to considerable weight; but I have frequently heard them appealed to on the other side of the House, as almost conclusive declarations in matters of commercial policy. That hon. baronet has expressed this opinion, with respect to the duty on timber,—“The duty on timber affects and injures industry in a great variety of ways, in consequence of its being so much used in buildings, ships, machinery, &c.”

He then goes on to say, “That countries possessing forests in the vicinity of navigable rivers, have great advantages over others not so circumstanced, and by laying a duty on timber, you still further increase those advantages. It would appear as if it were an indispensable preliminary to a continued successful competition with foreign shipbuilders, that you should admit foreign timber free of all duty.”

“That, however (he adds), might be too great a sacrifice of revenue;” and he goes on to state that the particular measure he proposed was this:—that, in place of the present duty, it should be reduced to £1 10s. per load; and that, thereby, he calculated the revenue would be considerably increased, because then, nearly the whole of the foreign timber consumed would pay a duty of £1 10s., instead of a small portion paying £2 15s., and the remainder only 10s. His proposal was, to impose a duty of 30s. on foreign timber, and of 10s. on that from our colonies; and the duty I propose, from 5th April, 1843, is 25s. on foreign timber, 30s. on deals, and on colonial timber only a nominal duty. [Mr. Labouchere: That proposition was made when the revenue was abundant.] Perhaps the right hon. gentleman would wish me to impose an additional duty on foreign timber. Why, that was the policy of the late government; but I leave the House to judge which is the wisest policy—if you can afford it, to encourage the importation of foreign and Canadian timber at the duties I recommend, or to lay a duty of 50s. on foreign timber, and of 20s. on Canadian timber. If Sir Henry Parnell be right, I cannot help thinking that, if your object be to relieve the pressure upon the springs of industry—upon the ship-builder, the landowner, the builder of manufactories, or the builder of cottages and houses of every description—it is hardly possible for you to make a reduction of duty upon any article of consumption which will give such great and general assistance as the duty on timber, the facility in the importation of which will be so extensively increased. If you can do this without injustice to the colonial timber merchant, you will have accomplished a most important benefit. With respect to coffee, also, I am surprised at the comments made on the other side, on my proposed reduction of duty. I thought, after the evidence taken before the import duties committee, showing the gradual increase of consumption—after the testimony given by coffee-house keepers in London, as to the immense importance which the labouring classes attach to the cheapness of coffee—I did not expect to hear from the noble lord a doubt as to the policy of sacrificing revenue for the sake of increasing consumption. For this purpose, in addition to the deficiency caused by expenditure, I am willing to incur the risk of further deficiency by a remission of duty, making, as I before stated, the total deficiency to be supplied amount to £4,300,000. I do not deny the objections that exist to a tax upon income: I expected to hear it said, that it is a novel proposition in time of peace; but let me ask, is there any man who can be deceived by such plausible but fallacious observations? It is public necessity which justifies the tax, whether imposed in time of peace or of war. In time of peace, too! To call this a time of peace. Because you have not the cannon actually booming in your ears, you wisely arrive at the conclusion that we are living in a time of peace. Elevate your vision until it can embrace your Indian territory; look at the war you have been carrying on on the western bank of the Indus. I say nothing of the policy of the course you have pursued there, but can a country engaged in such a war flatter itself that it is at peace? Look again at your Syrian expedition of last year, and concurrently with that, the costly hostilities carried on in China. Have you been, and are you now, in that state of profound tranquillity which entitles you to call it peace? Mark, then, all these sources of expenditure, and tell me if you are not in a condition which excepts the present from the ordinary case, and justifies a resort to the Income-tax, and to the objections and inconveniences to which I knew it is liable? The noble lord says,—“Do not impose the



Income-tax, because you will show foreign nations that the resources of this country are exhausted."

I say, never mind what may be the impression upon foreign countries. Do that which you believe to be just—that which you think consistent with sound policy—and let foreign nations think what they will. If, in a time of peace—a time of European peace—you have a large deficiency to supply, and consider it more just that the affluent classes shall supply it, rather than pressing upon the poor by taxing articles of consumption, adopt that course, and do not be afraid of what foreign countries may think of your resources. If foreign countries misapprehend and mistake—if they print paragraphs in newspapers, to show that England is in a condition of financial embarrassment—what difference can that make in your real situation? The time will come when they will discover their error; and, in the meanwhile, act no unworthy as well as unwise part, but disregard all such consequences as to what others may, for the moment, think of your condition and resources. If you do what is just, and so far what is politic, depend upon it, after mists have cleared away, perhaps, in a little week, foreign countries will arrive at a more fair conclusion, and if their opinion be of so much importance, they will then admire you for making exertions corresponding with the necessity of the occasion. In order to prevent erroneous notions on their part, will you consent to pursue a course which you know to be neither just nor politic? With such a deficiency as I have pointed out, is it better then to call upon the income of the country to supply it, or to tax articles of general consumption? There is no alternative. In order to raise four millions of revenue, does any man think there is any alternative? You want four millions for the service of the present year, but to try experiments on the commercial tariff of the country will not furnish the money, and does any man mean to tell me that there is any middle course between imposing a tax upon property and laying taxes upon articles of consumption? Certainly, you may say, I will resort to a house-tax; but I can only say that Mr. Pitt adopted that course in 1797, and found the burden so great, and the evasions such, that in the next year he resorted to a property-tax. Mr. Pitt, wishing to affect the property of the country, produced a plan by which the assessed taxes paid at a preceding period, should be considered the test of property. He tried to obtain a 10 per cent. Income-tax by that criterion; but he was obliged to abandon it, and my belief is, that a house-tax would be much more unjust in its operation than an Income-tax. The objection to the Income-tax is, that it is inquisitorial. I do not deny the objection; but, apart from that, I feel it to be one of the best taxes that can be imposed: 3 per cent., in the present condition of the country, is absolutely necessary to procure the supply, and I make the proposition from a firm conviction that it will be infinitely less onerous and more just than any other tax. Moreover, I have the strongest persuasion that if my general proposal be received by the House, the actual sum each man will contribute will be exceedingly small. If my whole plan be adopted, there will be a diminution in the cost of living which will repay to the contributors of the Income-tax a large portion of the money they are called upon to advance. Take the case of a man of £5000 a year: he will contribute £150, and it is my fixed belief that he will receive back, in cheapness of living, the greater part of the sum he pays. My settled opinion is, that the burden will be less than that arising from any other tax we could devise. The noble viscount (Viscount Howick) states the case of a man who has only £153 per annum; but, wherever you draw the line, there must be some hardship; and I will venture to say, that it is impossible to propose a tax which will not be liable to an objection of that kind. But even in the case of a man of £150 or £200 a year, I entertain the most confident hope that the reduced cost of articles of consumption will enable him to pay the tax without inconvenience. Suppose the noble viscount were to take a window-tax instead, there must be an exemption of houses under a certain number of windows: seven windows might have to pay, and six windows be free from the impost; but still a line must be drawn, and, where it is drawn, there will, of necessity, be hardship; the rule must, to a certain extent, be arbitrary and inconsistent with the strict principles of reasoning. I do trust, however, that this tax will not be condemned upon individual cases of hardship, but that the House will rather attend to general results, and fairly consider whether any other tax, equally just, can be found, which will be equally

effectual in raising the required supply for the public exigency. I said, on a former day, that I would avail myself of the earliest opportunity of giving a full explanation of the machinery for the collection of the tax, and I assure the right hon. gentleman, that when I refused to answer the question he put to me the other day, it was from a strong impression that I could not, in answering a question, give a full and satisfactory explanation. I thought it would be infinitely better to reserve myself to a time when I could go into all the details. The period since the Income-tax was imposed, is considerable; I know that I speak to many who are aware, from practical experience, or from being conversant with financial subjects, of the principles applied to the collection of the tax; but, in order to make the matter intelligible to those who may not be so well acquainted with it, I must necessarily refer to some points well known to such as have made the subject their study. I shall now propose to adopt, for the purpose of the collection of this tax, the machinery, speaking generally, applied by that act brought in by Lord Lansdowne, then Lord Henry Petty, in the year 1806, under the administration of Lord Grenville and Lord Grey; and a reference to that act will show any hon. gentleman, who may wish to ascertain it with precision, the general mode which I propose to adopt for the collection of this tax. The property tax was collected and assessed by that act, and it will be collected and assessed now under the general regulation applicable to the collection and raising of the assessed taxes, and the land-tax. There are in each county in England, certain persons known by the name of the commissioners of land-tax. Those commissioners of the land-tax will be empowered, and required to appoint, speaking generally, from their own body, but they will not be limited in the selection to themselves, certain commissioners, to be called commissioners for general purposes. Those commissioners for general purposes will have to select others, to be called additional commissioners. Those additional commissioners were not limited in the act, but, generally, two were appointed, and those two had the charge of the assessment on property. I need not enter into the mode in which bank stock, East-India stock, and stock in other public companies, will be assessed, but I may say, generally, that I shall adhere to the provisions of the old law. As far as the interference of the government is concerned, the duty will be placed under the general superintendence of the office of stamps and taxes, and their officers, as far as they are available, in all the duties connected with the mode in which the tax is to be levied. The local commissioners will appoint assessors, who will deliver at a certain time blank forms within the districts for which they act, with minute instructions how they are to be filled up. Every person will have to make an accurate return of the property derived from land, from the rents of houses, and from other property included in schedule A. With respect to the profits derived from trade, the provisions of the act of 1806 I propose to retain, and the income will be returned on an average of the three years preceding; but, of course, it will be necessary to make special provision for those instances in which the trade shall not have been carried on for three years, which I need not now detail. The general principle will be, to estimate the profits on an average of the three years. With respect to the income derived from professions, they are to be calculated upon the profit of the preceding year. I really, Sir, believe, that the chief difficulty will arise from the income in schedule D, the income derived from trades and professions. I believe it is with respect to that income, the inquisitorial power is mainly objected to. With respect to incomes derived from the public funds, there will be no necessity for this inquisition, the amount is easily ascertained, and few who have this property, will deprecate the mode of ascertaining it. Under an act, too, recently passed—I refer to Mr. Poulett Scrope's Act—the valuation of land is tolerably well known. It will, then, be generally conceded, that the chief force of the objection as to the inquisitorial nature of the assessment, will apply to income derived from trade, and to professional income. I, then, propose, that the return shall be sent to the assistant-commissioners, and that it should be accessible to the surveyor acting on the part of the government. With respect to the additional commissioners, there will be various regulations, and they will be sworn to secrecy. The return is to be sent to them sealed up, it is to be inspected by them, and it will be competent for them, or for the surveyor acting on the part of the government, to make a surcharge on that assessment. Then, as the law stood in the year 1806, an appeal against the surcharge could be made to

the head of the general body of commissioners, called the commissioners for general purposes. They will hear the appeal, and have the power of demanding precise information as to the nature of the property. I hope, that I shall be able to retain that provision, because the policy of the law hitherto has been, with respect to the assessed taxes, and it was the principle with respect to the property tax, not to make the collection depend upon the will of the government, because it was thought more consistent with constitutional law, to entrust the amount to local parties, and that those who may have the confidence of their neighbours shall be employed for this purpose. I propose, Sir, to leave the provision of the law in this respect untouched. Although, however, it is more consistent with former usage to employ local parties in each neighbourhood to collect the tax, yet a great objection has been raised to their sitting in appeal on the affairs of their immediate neighbours. It has been peculiarly objected that it is inexpedient to produce before their neighbours, or those who might stand towards themselves in the relation of friends, or of personal or political enemies, these accounts, and divulging to them their true state. I propose, therefore, to appoint other persons, and to give an option to the parties. I propose that the tax-office should appoint a certain number of persons, to be named special commissioners, and I propose that these special commissioners shall have all the powers of hearing appeals which the commissioners for general purposes possessed under the act of 1806. I propose that the party shall have full power of going before the committee of general purposes, if they so pleased, but, if they preferred it, the appeal might be heard by the special commissioners under the control of the government, and appointed by the tax-office, which commissioners will be sworn to secrecy. I propose, then, that, at the option of the party, the appeal may be heard by these special commissioners. The decision that these special commissioners may come to, will of course be final. It has not appeared to me necessary to extend this option beyond those who make returns from property included in schedule D. When, Sir, I am stating this, of course I reserve to myself the right to alter it. There is, I fear, a disposition to blame the government if they make any alteration in the proposals they submit to the House. I trust that, with respect to minute matters, after seeing a variety of persons, the House will not make it a subject of reflection, if, having a great subject to deal with, I may alter the details; I am sure that in matters of principle there will be little for me to alter, but in matters of detail, I reserve to myself the right of making use of any information I may receive, in order to form a satisfactory arrangement upon this subject, and full power of making any alteration which I may be satisfied is consistent with public policy. Then, Sir, I hope to be able to include in the new act some provisions which are not in the old act of 1806; I hope to be enabled, with respect to parties who have been once in the returns, whether in respect to the income from trades on an average of three years, or to the profits of professions for one year, to make an arrangement by which they may be able to compound for their assessment. I am sure that every endeavour ought to be made to guard against evasion, since one great objection to the Income-tax is, that it will fall with peculiar severity upon those who are determined to act honestly. We ought to endeavour, if we can, to avoid entailing peculiar severity on any one; if this act and if this Income-tax is to pass, we ought to give every advantage to the honest man, and to use every prevention against fraud or evasion. I hope to be enabled to introduce some provision which will make one return endure for the whole time of the act. I do not say that in all cases it ought to be obligatory on the office of stamps and taxes to admit a composition; but when they believe that the person as assessed is properly taxed, I think, that with some such addition as the £5 per cent. on the assessed taxes, we can, by some mode or other, make some easy provision to enable the tax to be payable once for all. In making this statement, I do not bind myself to all the special provisions. I think that we may have recourse to some things which may be a great improvement, without acting with any undue severity. The House, therefore, will see, that these are two main provisions in this act which are not in the other. In the first place, if the appeal to the local commissioners shall be objected to, as leading to a disclosure of private affairs, I propose to give as an option of which the party may avail himself, to go before the special commissioners appointed by the government, sworn to secrecy, who may hear all parties, and determine the appeal. And, in the second place, I

propose, if possible, that facilities shall be given for compounding for the payment of the tax, that composition to endure for the whole period of three years. I believe, Sir, that I have now answered the question put to me by the right hon. gentleman. I do not apprehend that the present establishment of the stamps and taxes will be sufficient for the additional duties I impose on them. All I say is, that every effort shall be made, in the appointment of additional officers, that their general character shall be a sufficient guarantee for the integrity with which they shall perform their duties, and every endeavour shall be made to prevent a permanent increase or encumbrance upon the country, of officers, who, I trust, will be employed for a merely temporary purpose. There is only one other provision proposed by me on which I wish to touch. It was included in one of the acts relating to the property-tax. I think the act of 1806. Many persons did object to payment to the collectors of the sums due from them on account of the property-tax; it was said that although there was no inquiry as to the property, it was still painful to some that a person in the immediate neighbourhood should be privy to the payment, from which they might infer the return that had been made of the amount of the property. I propose that a party wishing to make a payment may do so, without giving his name, into the Bank of England, on account of the property-tax. That was a provision in the act of Lord Grenville, and I might refer to that. I hope that as the branches of the Bank of England have become numerous, that as the ramifications of the Bank of England become more extended in different parts of the country, parties may have the advantage of making these payments with infinitely greater ease than if the place of payment was confined to the principal office of the Bank of England in London. A question, Sir, was put to me, respecting terminable annuities, and I was asked whether I proposed any reduction in the rate of duty on terminable annuities as compared with incomes derived from stock. Now, I am bound to say, that I do not intend to make any such reduction. The proposal which I make is a proposal for a tax on the income of this country; and if I once begin to make a distinction with respect to different kinds of income, it will be absolutely necessary that I should abandon the Income-tax. If the Bank of England—if the owners of terminable annuities were to be exempted—if a distinction were to be made in favour of those who are comparatively wealthy and affluent, I think that I could easily show that the remission must be made to a much greater extent than hon. gentlemen may perhaps be inclined to think. If there is to be an Income-tax at all, it must be uniformly laid upon all income, and in no case whatever can I allow a distinction to be drawn. Therefore, whatever inconvenience I may suffer from it in argument, I am bound not to admit the justice of an alteration of the bill with respect to terminable annuities. With regard to them, there was no distinction made by Mr. Pitt in 1798—no distinction was made in the act of 1806. I am aware that the terminable annuities had at that time a much longer period to run; but still the principle is the same, and the tax was laid on terminable annuities. At that time there were also exchequer annuities, and which were then in much the same position as are the terminable annuities now. The tax I propose is 3 per cent. upon income, and from that tax no remission or reduction can be made on account of any class who are thought at all competent to pay it. I now leave this question with the House. The noble lord intends, and I am glad to hear it, to ask by vote for the determination of the House, and I hope that that determination will be expressed at as early a period as is consistent with the due deliberation on so important a matter. By your vote upon this measure, you will express your opinions of the whole financial policy of the year, and by that vote the determination of the question in whose hands the government of this country shall be placed. If the House thinks it desirable to support the principle of the noble lord (Lord J. Russell), and the measures which he proposes—if it thinks that by imposing a fixed duty upon corn, and by reducing the duty on foreign sugar, it will meet the difficulties by which the country is at present surrounded—if it adopts these principles, and rejects those which I have recommended, then the administration of the affairs of government will again change hands.—But, for myself, I am not prepared now—considering the question of slavery, considering the prospects of supply, the condition of our colonies, and the other important points which crowd themselves upon one's mind in reviewing subjects of such general interest—considering all these things, I am not now prepared to advise a remission of

the duties upon foreign sugar, and not being so prepared, I cannot advise a remission of the duties on the sugar of our own colonies. The more I look at this question, the more I consider the amount of the sum to be raised, the more confident am I that the best measure now to be adopted is to resort to a tax upon income rather than to impose a tax upon those articles of excise and customs to which I have referred, and upon which an abatement of the duties has of late years been made. I believe that such an attempt would far more disturb the application of capital and the operations of active industry, than will a call upon each individual to pay £3 out of every £100. I have a strong conviction that the great mass of the lower classes will consider the voluntary determination of parliament to accept for themselves, and to impose upon the wealth of the country this tax for the purpose of relieving its burdens—I have a strong conviction that it will be generally hailed on the part of the country, as a strong proof of the determination of the upper classes to bear their fair share of taxation. Although I admit that the tax may press with additional severity, on account of the uncertain nature of profits, on that property which is derived from trade and professions, yet, when I consider that one of the main objects of this measure is to reduce the duties upon the raw materials of production, and that such a reduction will give the best chance for a revival of commerce, I cannot but think that the measure will work for the especial advantage of those who are connected with the trade of the country. As to those who hold land, or those who derive their incomes from professions, I have a confident expectation that by reducing the cost of living I shall compensate them for a great part of their burden, but if I may not offer them that advantage—yet, if by consenting to such a burden, instead of throwing it upon the articles of consumption, they diminish the embarrassments of their country, and take from those who are disposed to agitate the public mind the means of creating discontent and disunion—if they effect this, surely the compensation they will receive will be ample. I hope that my expectations as to the revival of trade in three years will not be disappointed—that my anticipations as to the temporary character of this tax will be realised. Then, when that happy time arrives, when we shall be enabled to dispense with this tax, then shall we find a revival of commerce and of industry, and then shall we have the satisfaction of contemplating a people contented and united, from the proof they will have received that those in the highest stations, and those who are comparatively affluent, are prepared, in a crisis of commercial and financial difficulty, to bear their full portion of any charge which the exigencies of the country may render necessary.

The right hon. baronet concluded by moving the following resolution:—

“That it is the opinion of this committee, that, towards raising the supply granted to her Majesty, there be charged annually, during a term to be limited, the several rates and duties following, that is to say:—

“For and in respect of the property in any lands, tenements, or hereditaments, and for and in respect of every annuity, pension, or stipend, payable by her Majesty, or out of the public revenue of the United Kingdom; and for and in respect of all interest of money, annuities, dividends, and shares of annuities, payable to any person or persons, bodies politic or corporate, companies or societies, whether corporate or not corporate; and for and in respect of the annual profits or gains arising or accruing to any person or persons whatever, resident in Great Britain, from any kind of property whatever, whether situate in Great Britain or elsewhere, or from stipend or any annuities, allowances, or from any profession, trade, or vocation, whether the same shall be respectively exercised in Great Britain or elsewhere; and for and in respect of the annual profits or gains arising and accruing to any person or persons not resident within Great Britain, from any property whatever in Great Britain, or from any trade, profession, or vocation, exercised in Great Britain; for every 20s. of the annual value or amount thereof, 7d.

“For and in respect of the occupation of any lands, tenements, or hereditaments (other than a dwelling-house occupied by a tenant distinct from a farm of lands), for every 20s. of the annual value thereof, 3½d.”

Debate adjourned.

MARCH 23, 1842.

SIR R. PEEL, on this, the third night of the debate, spoke as follows:—Sir, after the comments that have been made in the course of three nights' debate, upon the proposal which I made for relieving the country from its financial difficulties, I must naturally feel some anxiety to reply to some of the observations that have been directed against it; and I must first remark on the objection taken to the course I have pursued by the hon. member for Liskeard. I was told by him in the course of this evening, that having no confidence in the abstract merits of the measure I had brought forward, and being unable to support it by argument, I had resorted to topics calculated to excite party feeling, and had sought that aid from party excitement which I could not hope to find in reason and in argument. Sir, I refer for my vindication against that charge to all those hon. gentlemen who heard me make my financial statement. I ask whether, when I detailed to the House the causes of the present difficulties, and proposed my remedy for them, it was possible for any man more studiously to abstain from every topic of a party nature. It was necessary for me to refer, among other causes of expenditure, to the China war, and to the war west of the Indus, but in referring to those causes of increased expense, did I not abstain from entering into any political subject that could be considered likely to provoke discussion of a party nature? But, Sir, when on a following night, I had to vindicate the course which I had pursued, I stood in a very different position. On the first night I had been told that my proposition should be considered as a whole; there was an admission of the great financial embarrassment, and I was told that my proposition should be regarded with no party feeling, that it should be discussed altogether on its abstract merits; and I appeal to those who recollect the second night's debate, whether any measure could be attacked in a manner more partaking of party spirit? As I said on a former occasion, I had foreseen much opposition, and I expected to be called upon to vindicate my measure; and when I did vindicate it, having been thus provoked, was it not natural that I should remind those who attacked my measure, that they and their policy had been the chief cause of the difficulties in which the country was placed? And really, Sir, wishing, though I do not, to discuss the subject in the temper in which it has been begun, I must say, that a speech of greater bitterness I never heard, than that which fell from the right hon. gentleman, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer. Why, Sir, was it not said that I had maintained the sugar duties, not because I was convinced of the policy of maintaining them, but because I wished to preserve my consistency—that I would not propose any measure that could unfavourably affect my own political position? Is it not true, that not one word was said against the present measure when it was first proposed? Was it not a measure in respect to which I received the assurance that it should be calmly and deliberately considered? Did not the noble lord and the right hon. gentleman state, that the subject was one to which they had given great consideration—that it was one which had necessarily occupied their attention? And yet they can now come to no other conclusion than that a more unjust, a more inquisitorial, a more oppressive measure, could never have been proposed by any minister. Why could they not arrive at that conclusion on the first night? Of course, in reviewing their financial difficulties, the subject of a tax upon income must have come under their notice and consideration, and they might have been as well prepared on the first night as on the second, to declare their conviction that a tax upon income was an unjust, inquisitorial, and oppressive measure. I must say, therefore, that I spoke on the second evening rather under the impression, that the attack on my measure was not dictated by that spirit of calm inquiry in which the noble lord had promised that it should be examined, such as guides philosophers in the closet, but partook much more of the character of a meeting at the reform club. Therefore, whatever might have been my wishes on first proposing the measure, yet, after the assurance I then received, after the manner in which I opened the proposal, and after the manner in which I and the measure were assailed, then, indeed, I did that which I always will do—I vindicated to the best of my power the measure which I had introduced, and the motives which had influenced me in introducing it. Sir, I must say I was surprised that this measure of the Income-tax should have been denounced by the leaders of the party opposite, without reference

to the public exigency or necessity. I was surprised to hear it denounced as an odious and unjust measure—one which no minister ought ever to have proposed. Because I remember perfectly well, that among those who have been connected with the party opposite, those whose attention has been chiefly directed to matters of finance, direct declarations have been left upon record, that seeing the nature of our taxation, seeing its tendency to press upon labour and upon the articles which form the necessary consumption of the great masses of the people, a Property-tax might be resorted to with advantage during a peace. I have heard them with my own ears deliver that opinion. I heard Lord Althorp give that opinion distinctly. Sir Henry Parnell left it on record; and, at a period when no such financial difficulty existed, as now exists, for the sole purpose of relieving the articles of general consumption in the country, and the productive industry of the country from the pressure of taxation, Mr. P. Thomson, Lord Althorp, Mr. Hume, Sir H. Parnell, all declared in favour of a Property-tax. The principle, therefore, of a Property-tax during peace, were hon. gentlemen opposite acting from philosophical and not from party views, would not be denounced with quite so much sternness as has been evinced on the other side. Then, Sir, I am told that I have not established any necessity for a Property-tax. Let me pass in review the chief objections that have been urged against my course and against the measure. I am told, first, that I have established no sufficient financial necessity for the imposition of a Property-tax in time of peace; and here I must fairly own that I am now making an appeal, not so much to gentlemen opposite, as to the deliberate judgment of the country, on which I rely for ultimate support—that deliberating class who are enabled to form a just judgment of the financial difficulties in which we are now placed, and of the inevitable consequences that must attend our permitting them during peace, to proceed, without making any attempt to check their progress, and I ask them maturely to consider, whether I did not establish such a financial necessity as calls, at least, for some very decisive measure. It is proved, that there has been an increasing deficit during the last six years, and that during the last four years that deficit has been rapidly increasing. I include in my calculation the year ending the 5th of April, 1843, because there has been no complaint of my estimate for the year, and I am therefore entitled to assume that it is correct. It is shown, that on the 5th of April, 1840, there was a deficit of income, as compared with the expenditure, of £1,487,000; that in 1841, there was a deficit of £1,851,000; that in 1842, there was a deficit of £2,334,000; and that on the year ending the 5th of April, 1843, there will be a deficit of £2,573,000. It is proved that up to the 5th of April, 1843, on a comparison of your income with your expenditure, and including the deficiencies of the year, you will, in the twenty-sixth year of peace, have accumulated during six years a fresh debt of £10,000,000. It is proved that, for the present year, your expenditure will exceed your income by £2,500,000, taking the expenditure as voted upon the estimates, but it will be found that the deficit cannot be less than £3,500,000, for I shall have to submit an estimate for a reinforcement of our troops in India, and we shall have to pay the expenses of the China expedition for the current year. Why, that fact alone, is enough to establish a case of considerable financial difficulty. I, at the same time, reminded you of the position of a great branch of your empire in another hemisphere. I asked you to remember the position of Indian finance. I reminded you that Indian finance had followed the course of the finances at home; that in 1836, you began with a great surplus; that in 1841, you had ended with a great deficit; that in 1836, you found a surplus of £1,500,000 at least; that by 1840, you found a deficit of £2,300,000, and by 1841, a deficit of £2,400,000; that the Indian government were now raising £2,000,000, at 5 per cent. I asked you to remember that ere long your credit might be required to be brought in aid of Indian credit, should any great reverses or difficulties arise; and I said, also, that I thought it would be a wise course to abstain from incurring doubt, and to maintain the public credit here, by showing a determination to raise the necessary supplies immediately. Those were the proofs I adduced, in order to show that there existed a financial necessity. Sir, if I had not felt a full confidence in the spirit and in the resources of this country, I might have shrunk from developing the truth; but it is because I do know the country has within itself energy and resources sufficient to overcome all its difficulties, that I at once met the difficulty, and on that ground I

would not conceal the truth from the public. I say nothing whatever as to the prospects in India. I have received no provocation to-night to enter into that subject, and I wish to adhere to the example set me by the other side, and say nothing as to our policy and prospects on the western side of the Indus. I must, however, say, that I take no desponding view of the state of affairs in India. I have just the same confidence that I have always had in the valour and energy of England, already so gloriously displayed in that great field of exertion; and I hope and trust that those exertions will be great in proportion to the difficulty, and will soon repair our temporary disasters. But I think the hon. member for Lambeth, the other night, was rather too hasty, in saying that he should refuse his assent to any measure whatever that might be necessary to adopt for the reparation of those disasters. "Not one shilling of the Income-tax," said the hon. member, "shall, with my consent, be applied to the war in Affghanistan." I shall not, as I have said, on the present occasion, enter into any inquiry into the causes of the present state of things there, but I do trust the House will suspend their decision until there has been a full investigation, and that they will not only consider the policy that undertook that war, but that they will also suspend their judgment upon the policy which ministers think it necessary to adopt, as British life has been sacrificed to a great extent, and sacrificed by gross perfidy and violation of solemn engagements. The hon. gentleman says, the Affghans are engaged in a battle for their independence, and, he adds, that he holds me responsible for the Affghanistan expedition. Sir, I beg leave to say, that when I first heard of the expedition across the Indus, I had the greatest doubts of its good policy or the extension of our empire in India. I acquiesced in the views of that gallant and distinguished officer, Sir Alexander Burnes, who has fallen a victim to his zeal for the service of his country, and who has left on record his opinion, that, "to attempt to restore Shah Soojah to the throne from whence he had been expelled in 1809, was a measure, the failure of which would entail upon us disgrace and disaster." I read that passage, and I said at the time, that the attempt to force Shah Soojah on the throne of Affghanistan very much resembled what our policy would have been, had we attempted to force Charles X. upon the throne of France. Shah Soojah had been expelled from the throne, and his personal character was held in the utmost contempt by those over whom we had compulsorily placed him to rule. Sir, it appears to me, that at a period when the policy of the country is determined on, and when ten thousand men may be required to assert our power in India, the hon. gentleman should not presume that we were unwilling, powerful as we are, to carry out the military policy of the country. The position of affairs is now very different to what it was before the Affghan expedition; you might, at the outset, remonstrate, but it is not now wise to damp the spirit and ardour of the troops by such observations. At the same time, however, I must disclaim for myself, and for those with whom I act, all responsibility for the expedition beyond the Indus. Whatever we may think of the original policy which dictated that expedition, we will take such steps as we conceive British honour now requires, with as much good faith and energy as if the expedition had originally been a part of our own policy. To revert, however, to our financial position. I have shown that a deficit of £10,000,000 has been incurred during the last six years; the deficit of India is nearly £5,000,000 on the expenditure of the last two years alone; and I submit it to the deliberate judgment and decision of those who hear me, whether it be not absolutely necessary to make some great exertion to rescue ourselves from such a financial difficulty? But the next question is, what shall be the nature of that exertion? I think the great majority of the House admits that we have made out the existence of the necessity for the exertion. It is a mere delusion to say that this is not the time for such a measure. I do not say I propose the Income-tax because of the war in Affghanistan, or because there is a war in China, but I say that we should review our financial position regarding those two wars, as causes of increased expenditure, which certainly of themselves would not justify the course proposed, but which, combined with other causes of increasing expenditure, do concurrently contribute with them to form such a cause as justifies some great exertion or other. Then, what shall that exertion be? I am told that the budget of last year was sufficient to relieve it. I am convinced, however, that if the budget of last year had been carried by the assent of the House of Commons, there would



still have arisen a necessity for some such exertion as I now propose. The budget of last year calculated an increase upon the sugar duties of £700,000 to arise from the proposed admission of foreign sugar. That amount has been realized by the unexpected importation of sugar from the East Indies, and a reduction in the price of the article. As nearly as possible, the sum which the right hon. gentleman calculated upon, by the reduction of the duty on foreign sugar, has by these means been obtained. With respect to the duty on corn, it is, of course, very difficult to form any estimate of what it might produce. The noble lord calculated that the same number of quarters would be admitted at an 8s. fixed duty, as had been admitted at 6s. 8d. and at 1s. On this subject it is very difficult to form an opinion, but I cannot conceive on what grounds the noble lord argues that the same quantity would be brought in at an 8s. duty as has been imported at a duty of 1s. But, now, with respect to timber. I am quite prepared to admit, that the proposal of the right hon. gentleman with regard to timber would, had it been adopted, have produced a larger amount to the revenue than that which I submit to the House. The right hon. gentleman proposed to reduce the discriminating duty on Baltic timber by 5s., keeping the duty at 56s., and to continue the discriminating duty between foreign and colonial timber to the extent of 30s., by imposing a new duty of 10s. on timber, the growth of the Canadas, thus leaving the duty on colonial timber at 20s., and that on foreign timber to 50s. Now, I admit, that this alteration would have produced a larger amount of revenue, but, at the same time, I am prepared to contend, if the country can make any remission of taxation, that there is not a single article in the tariff upon which a reduction of the duty would tell with greater effect in encouraging the industry of the country, than the article of timber. I say, therefore, that I am surprised at the hostility which has been shown to my proposition by the other side of the House. Gentlemen opposite profess a great respect for the opinions of Mr. Deacon Hume. Now, what does Mr. Deacon Hume say on the subject of a reduction of the timber duties? He tells you that—"if the country could afford to give up the whole amount of the timber duty, there is not one other article to which I would sooner give perfect freedom from duty in this country than wood. We possess iron and coal, and we have not got wood, and our case would be complete with the three. We act towards wood, as France acts towards iron."

Sir, the ancient policy of this country was to encourage the importation of timber, at a nominal or a very small duty, as was recommended by Mr. Deacon Hume. Up to 1795, in the midst of war, the whole duty on foreign timber was only 6s. 8d. the load of cubic feet; the governments of that day considering wood in the light of a raw material entering into almost every species of manufactures, and consequently deeming it expedient that a low duty should be imposed. It was not, therefore, until the hottest of the war that wood was subjected to increased taxation. Why then, Sir, is not my proposal in accordance with the ancient principles of our taxation? at the same time, that it is calculated to benefit the consumer, and confer a greater benefit on him than he could obtain from the proposition of the right hon. gentleman. I again, then, repeat my conviction, that if I can secure a tax on the property of the country, and reduce the timber duty, I shall do more to restore activity in our trade and commerce, and to benefit the population of the country generally, than by any single measure that I could propose to parliament. And before hon. gentlemen decide on this point, I wish they would read the evidence given before a committee of this House, with respect to fisheries. They will find, by reference to the reports of the committees on import duties, in 1805 and in 1840, that our fishermen are represented to be subject to very great disadvantages in consequence of the existence of this timber duty. I would refer gentlemen, especially, to the evidence given by Mr. John Mitchell. Let them attentively consider what he says, as to the superiority of the dwellings of the humbler classes of Norway to those of our own country, arising solely from the cheapness of wood. Then, again, I would ask gentlemen to read the evidence as to ship-building. They will find it stated, under that head, that the timber duties are acting most injuriously to the interests of our ship-builders, and that even the trade of the country in ship-building is leaving us, on account of the existence of these duties. Therefore, I say, that although under my proposition, so much may not be got for revenue, yet the reduction of the duty on colonial timber

to a nominal amount, and the reduction of the duty on foreign timber from 55s. to 30s., is one of the best measures for the consumer, the shipbuilder, and the country generally, that it would almost be possible for me to propose. But, Sir, it is said by hon. gentlemen opposite, that I take a gloomy view of the state of our finances, and that I hold to the opinion that there is no mode of redeeming lost ground but by the imposition of an Income-tax. Now, I say no such thing. I have all along said, that I believed the energies of the country are not exhausted, and that they only require time to revive. I could, had I so pleased, have gone back to articles from which the taxes have been removed, or have imposed additional taxes on what is already taxed. But I do not think it would be desirable to add to the extra 5 per cent. imposed last year upon articles of customs and excise. The right hon. gentleman opposite dwelt at some length upon the question of revenue to be derived from a duty on corn. He also adopted a very triumphant tone in referring to the amount received from sugar. Now, Sir, I do not think the right hon. gentleman can be permitted to take credit to himself for the additional amount derived from sugar. That additional duty was received from sources which were quite unexpected, and which certainly do not bear out the position that any credit attaches to the right hon. gentleman therefrom. Sir, I will take the revenue of last year, and strike off the sums received upon corn and sugar. The right hon. gentleman levied an additional duty of 5 per cent. on articles of customs and excise. Now, deducting the amounts received on corn and sugar, I find that the revenue from these sources in 1840, was £17,532,000. In 1842, after the imposition of the additional duty of 5 per cent., the revenue was £17,906,000; but the sum ought to have been £18,409,000, if the right hon. gentleman's expectations of the proceeds from his additional 5 per cent. had been satisfactorily realised. From this I infer, that with respect to customs and excise duties, we have almost arrived at the limits of taxation, and that it would not be wise to lay on any further duties. Well, then, Sir, if I go back to other articles, on which duty is or was received, I have no doubt but that I might have obtained the consent of the House of Commons to an additional duty, or to the reimposition of a duty not now existing. But I think, that it is more just at once to resort to a Property-tax than to seek to reimpose such burdens. I take the case of salt and leather. Now, I have no doubt a large revenue might be derived from either of these sources, and I have no doubt, also, that a large revenue might have been derived from a duty upon beer. But I do say, that I consider it more just and more politic to meet the difficulty at once, by proposing a tax upon incomes, than by reviving indirect taxes, which entail a heavy expense in collecting, and which cannot be imposed without greatly disturbing the trade and manufactures of the country. The scheme I propose is certainly liable to neither of these objections. I solve the difficulty by the Income-tax, at the same time that I relieve the consumer by reducing the taxation upon articles of general consumption. Now, the chief objections to my scheme have been enumerated by the hon. gentleman opposite, the member for Liskeard. The first objection of that hon. gentleman was a curious one. He objected to the tax, because the people would be enabled to see what was taken out of their pockets. Now, this is exactly so. An Income-tax is very sensibly felt in its operation. Taxes on articles do not come home so directly—a tax on salt or beer, for instance, would by no means be felt so sensibly. But then I am certainly surprised to hear this sort of argument urged on the other side, where it has always hitherto, I believe, been held, that the people ought to know exactly what they were called upon to pay. But then, Sir, it is said, that the public credit is shaken by my proposition. Now, certainly I see no such effect. I look at the state of the public funds, and I find that since my proposal was made, nothing has at all occurred presenting any indication that the public credit of the country is shaken. Then the next objection is, that a tax upon incomes has a great tendency to drive people from England. Why, has not the present system of taxation a tendency to drive people out of the country quite as great as the Income-tax? What is there at present to prevent the great landed proprietors of this country from living abroad, and from thereby escaping the effects of both direct and indirect taxation? But what I propose is, that those classes should be subjected to a direct contribution to the revenue, and from that contribution I apprehend they cannot possibly escape. At least, then, my scheme has this advantage, that I call on him, who chooses either for his amusement

or pleasure to travel abroad and evade taxation on consumption at home, to contribute his fair proportion towards the revenue of this country. But I do even more, I offer an inducement for the absentees to return. I propose by the amended tariff to reduce the cost of living in this country, which has hitherto, with a certain class at least, been the reason for residence abroad. I expect, that the result of the new tariff will be to reduce the cost of articles of consumption in this country; and let me ask, will not this have a tendency to induce absentees to return? I say it will. If by removing prohibitory duties, and reducing the scale of duties generally, I reduce the cost of living, I contend, that instead of driving capital out of the country, the general tendency of my measure will be to induce absentees to return, and insuring their remaining when once they come back. The hon. gentleman, the member for Bath, and also the hon. gentleman, the member for Liskeard, have addressed themselves to what they style the gross injustice of this tax. They say, they are content a tax should be imposed on property, but they object to its imposition on incomes—that is to say, to its being derived from parties whose receipts arise from professions or trades. [Mr. Roebuck: I objected to the rate being the same on the two species of income.] That objection cannot, I am afraid, be removed. The hon. gentleman did not object to the imposition, and he made no objections to the disclosure of the amount of an income. The hon. gentleman was singular in that opinion, for every one else who spoke on the same side with the hon. gentleman have contended that, with regard to incomes derived from trade or professions, the tax is most objectionable, and that not, be it remembered, so much on account of the amount of the tax itself, as on account of the imposition it establishes. The objection, therefore, of the hon. and learned gentleman, the member for Bath, is not that which has been urged by the great body of those who have addressed the House upon the subject. Now, Sir, when I really look at the object of this tax, I cannot admit the force of that objection against it. And I cannot bring myself to think that it would be fair or just to impose the whole, or, at all events, the greater portion of this tax upon incomes derived from land alone. And, Sir, I am not singular, in entertaining that opinion. Lord Althorp also held the same opinion, and expressed it in the following terms:—"Much has been said about a Property-tax, and he believed that on that point he differed considerably from his friends about him. Still he had no hesitation in saying that to grant relief to the productive population by a reduction of taxes, and to impose a Property-tax to meet the deficiency thus occasioned, would be a very good measure. That was his own individual opinion. The gallant general (General Gascoyne) might perhaps say, that his present opinions were inconsistent with his former opinions, and he would admit that it might seem to many that he was inconsistent. But the country was now in a situation very different from that in which it was formerly placed, and he would say to the landowner, that if a Property-tax of 10 per cent. were imposed, he would be the gainer, because he thought that the landowner, in consequence of the existing distress and the large sums which he was obliged to advance for the maintenance of the poor, lost considerably more than 10 per cent. on his rents."

Such, then, was the opinion of Lord Althorp upon the subject of a Property-tax. But now, Sir, what again is the object of this tax which I propose? It is simply to call upon all persons of a certain income to make, for a limited period, out of that income, a contribution for the public good. It is contended that it is unjust to tax all incomes at the same rate, and that there ought to be a distinction made between the kind of income and the source from which it is derived. But, Sir, it appears to me, that if the exemptions which have been suggested were to be carried into effect, this tax would be altogether inefficient. I think a tax so assessed had better not be imposed at all. And let me ask the House what tax ever was imposed that was not objected to, on account of its inequality? What was the beer-tax—the house-tax—the window-tax—what were the assessed taxes, when first imposed? Are all these taxes just in every one's eyes? Must not all taxes—direct or indirect—bear unequally upon those who pay them? Take the case of the professional man. I think the professional man might urge good arguments against the justice of the assessed taxes. I show you that the owner of what you call permanent capital has the greatest facilities for evading the tax. He can remove to the Continent, and draw his income as he requires it; but the professional man—the lawyer for instance, or the medical man—is compelled to remain in this country, and to submit to the

indirect taxation which prevails. All indirect taxation has a natural tendency to produce injustice, and I have ever thought that the chief argument relied on in opposition to the taxation of articles of consumption was, that if beer, or any other such article, were exposed to it, the tax always operated unjustly. You say that income derived from fixed property ought to be made subject to the tax I propose, but that income, drawn from professional exertion and the operations of trade, ought not to be taxed, partly owing to the inquisitorial nature of the tax itself, and partly from the nature of such property. But is it meant that the officer on half-pay should contribute to the tax, and that the physician of £9,000 or £10,000 a year should not? You say that terminable annuitants ought not to pay the same rate as landed proprietors; but would you say that a widow who has a jointure—a fixed sum per annum—which terminates with her life—would you say that she should pay the same amount? Again, with regard to life interests in estates, is there to be no difference between an estate in fee-simple and a life interest in a landed estate? If I have a life interest in an estate that has to pass to a distant relative who feels no particular interest in me, is it to be calculated what my interest in such estate may be? If I compare my position with that of a man holding his property in fee-simple, and who can charge it as he pleases, surely there is a vast difference in the comparative value of our interests; and I say again, that, looking to the Income-tax as a measure that would have to be resorted to in time of war, and looking at the necessity of imposing perhaps a 10 per cent. tax, rather than resorting to a system of borrowing and funding, it would be much better to abandon it altogether, rather than make a large number of exemptions. Or, suppose I am endeavouring to make a provision for my wife and children out of my life interest, do you say that I am to be equally taxed in that case? Then, what will you do with the clergy? If your principle is to be adopted, the clergy must all be exempt from taxation. It is quite clear that they must. How is a clergyman differently situated from an annuitant for a term of years? He has a certain income, which he holds for his life, with certain onerous duties to perform. The property is an enduring one, but his interest in it is only a life interest. Take the case of two brothers. Suppose one brother invests £5,000 in the funds, and receives his 3½ per cent., and that the other purchases a living, making a higher interest for his money, am I to make a reduction in this case? [A voice, "Yes."] The hon. member says, yes; then I say if I am to make that calculation in every case, I had much better abandon the system altogether. For to do so would be virtually abandoning the principle of making every man contribute in accordance with his means. Suppose I buy an annuity from an insurance-office, or suppose the case of a single man, who, wishing to enjoy a large income, sinks the whole of his money in the purchase of an annuity, am I to deal with him in the manner suggested by the hon. and learned gentleman? [Mr. Roebuck assented.] Well, then, I must say, that, after these admissions of the hon. and learned member, which I have been anxious to draw from him, and as to which I knew he was far too logical a reasoner not to acknowledge the connection of each of these cases with the other—if you are to proceed upon the principle he lays down, then I say that the inquisition under his plan will be ten times worse than that I propose under the present system. I do hope that I have now stated all the grounds on which I am of opinion that, if you establish this tax, you ought not to make any exemptions. Upon these grounds I have proposed this plan. I never said I should make no modification in the details; on the contrary, I have stated the modifications with respect to the mode of collection which I was willing to adopt; but I do again declare, that with respect to the main principle—namely, the levying of 7d. per pound on incomes above £150, I must urge it upon the adoption of the House, fearing exceedingly the consequences of abatements and exemptions of the nature that have been stated by hon. gentlemen opposite. Then, Sir, I am told, another great objection to this tax is, that it encourages perjury and fraud; but I should like to know what is the tendency of indirect taxation. I should like to know what is the tendency of excise duties. I should like to know what is the tendency of all the excise regulations as to distilleries. Taxation, I take it, is inevitable. Taxes we must have. Sir, I perfectly agree with the hon. and learned member for Bath, that nothing can be more frivolous or absurd than the extreme sensitiveness as to what a man's income may be. I believe that a very good estimate is usually formed of the

state of men's circumstances by those who care about inquiring into other men's property, and the state of their credit. There is a keen and quick instinct in such parties, which enables them to ascertain, without much difficulty, what their neighbours, or those with whom they may happen to have dealings, are worth, and as to the terrors of the inquisition, which I propose, into men's private affairs, it is mere folly, if men will only act honestly, and make *bond fide* returns. Sir, I do not believe that the tremendous consequences apprehended by the hon. gentleman opposite will follow the disclosure which will be required to be made, and I cannot suppose that any one will subject himself to inconvenience or embarrassment by being guilty of a fraud of this kind for the sake of £3 or £4. For my own part, I entertain a higher opinion of the integrity and fair dealing of the people of this country, than to suppose that an advantage of such an amount as £2 18s. in the £100, could operate as a temptation to perjury or fraud; but, at all events, as I said before, whatever may be the inconvenience attending direct taxation, depend upon it that it is better than resorting to that description of indirect taxation which leads to smuggling, and affords equal, if not greater, temptation, for fraud and perjury. Sir, I say, as I have already stated, that I do not propose an Income-tax for the mere and single purpose of making good the deficiency, but that I propose it concurrently with meeting the deficit in the revenue, to enable me to make extensive alterations in our tariff. There has been a disposition on the part of hon. gentlemen opposite to undervalue the changes I propose making in our tariff; but I am happy to say that the hon. member for Bolton—and no one is better informed on the subject than that hon. gentleman—does not join with those who have evinced such a disposition; for he says, candidly and fairly, that the alterations in the duties which I propose, are not only extensive but important. He undoubtedly says, I have omitted corn and sugar; but, in every other respect, he admits that the changes I propose are calculated to encourage the industry, the trade, and commerce of the country; and on these grounds bears his testimony to the value of these changes. Now, what are the changes which I propose, and what is the exact position in which I stand? I am met by conflicting statements from all sides; and the hon. gentleman the member for Sheffield says, that, though I remove prohibitions with respect to the import of cattle, that such a change will be of no advantage, because cattle cannot be bought on the Continent. But it is, I think it will be, acknowledged, impossible for me to proceed on such a supposition. Well, but what is it I do? Why, I permit both salt and fresh meat to come in; but what the hon. and learned gentleman says is, that even though I do so, it will be of no advantage to the consumer in this country, because no foreign cattle can be obtained, and that the calves are not yet born. Sir, I hope that hon. friends of mine on this side of the House, who have expressed some alarm on this part of the subject, have attended to the statement of the hon. and learned gentleman as to the demand for cattle on the Continent absorbing the supply. From the hon. and learned gentleman's showing, it is clear that these apprehensions are groundless, and it must, I think, be admitted, that, as far as I am concerned, I can do no more than I have done—that is, to increase the facilities for the importation of foreign cattle. It is, Sir, I think, unnecessary to look at the demand for cattle in France, or any other country, but if we merely advert to the number of cattle sold in Smithfield alone during the last year, and if we found that as many as 167,000 oxen were sold in Smithfield in a single year, I think the impossibility of bringing foreign cattle into competition with the superior animals of this country, must be admitted: and, with such a fact before them, I must say that I consider the apprehensions of my hon. friends altogether groundless. Now, with respect to salt meat, will not the admission of salt meat afford great facilities to commerce, at least, as regards the fitting out of ships? Great frauds have been practised with respect to the provisioning of ships. The uniform practice was to take the salted foreign meat out of bond, giving a sort of guarantee that it should be landed in a foreign port, but it, nevertheless, is applied to provisioning the ship. The danger of a serious interference with fresh meat is very absurd. I do not overrate the benefits to be derived in the cheapening of provisions; but I do think those persons in Scotland and Ireland who entertain apprehensions on this subject, greatly overrate the evil consequences that may result from permitting foreign meat to be brought into the London market. I propose to remove every prohibition, then, on

articles of provision. Look, again, at what I propose on the article of foreign wood. I have reduced to almost nominal amounts the duties on foreign woods. I believe, that the consequence will be, that new establishments will grow up in this country for the manufacture of articles of furniture. We labour at present under very great disadvantages in competing with foreigners in this respect. It will, therefore, be a very great advantage to have the duty on foreign woods, so materially reduced. I reduce the duty on every article of foreign wood, with one exception; and I trust, that by a treaty with Brazil, I shall be enabled to reduce the duty on that article also—I mean the article of rosewood. But then I am told, you should not proceed on this principle—you should proceed on the principle of remitting the duty upon articles of foreign production in every case, entirely regardless of what a foreign country may do. I am not altogether prepared to say, that it may not be good policy to buy at the cheapest market, without reference to the conduct of other nations. But, at the same time, it cannot be denied, that it would be a great advantage to us if we could get, when we make a reduction in our own duties, a corresponding advantage in return. We have every right to ask for it. For instance, it would be a great advantage to this country to receive the brandy of France at a much cheaper rate. I think its consumption would be very great. I believe France would derive great advantages from a remission of the duty; but it is quite clear, that France would derive as great advantage by permitting the introduction, at a moderate duty, of the manufactures of Sheffield, and I hope the people of France will feel that to buy cheap goods at Sheffield, would itself be of great advantage; but to act conjointly, with reciprocal advantages, would be better still. Then, with respect to the remission of the duty on timber, I do not mean to say that, abstractedly, it would not be a good thing to buy cheap timber in the Baltic, but I am sure there will be a greater demand for our goods in Norway and Sweden; and I do hope, that those countries which are concerned in the Prussian league will be convinced of the benefit of the mutual interchange of commodities, and that Sardinia, Brazil, Portugal, and Spain, will see the advantage of a great reduction of duties. That a reduction of duty should take place in foreign countries cannot be denied; that to give every access to the manufactures of this country would be a great advantage to them, I am ready to prove, and therefore I object to precipitate reductions of duty here, without attempting to obtain an equivalent corresponding reduction of duty on our own articles. That is the ground upon which I proceed. Look, again, at the reduction of the duty on oils, on drugs, on resin, on all those articles which constitute the raw material of manufactures. Who will be injured by that reduction? Look, again, at the reduction in skins and furs. I remit the duty. What is the effect of maintaining it so high as at present? It sounds like a prohibitory duty; but it does not act so. What is the use of maintaining a 30 per cent. prohibition, when the smuggler will undertake to deliver the article at an increase on its cost price of 10 per cent.? The advantage of the high duty goes into the pocket of the smuggler. Consequently, the moderate reduction of these prohibitory duties will be a positive advantage to the manufacturer, for it will enable him to know exactly and at once what he has to compete with. Take, again, the article of gloves; it is quite impossible to prevent the foreign import of such an article, because the smuggler, while the prohibitory duty exists, will find the means of evading the law. I also repeal the duty on manufactured leather,—on shoes and boots. In short, look through the whole of this tariff, and I venture to say it must, if the House sanctions it, tend greatly to reduce the cost of consumption. An hon. friend of mine has, within these few days, informed me that the union, of which he is one of the guardians, have entered into a contract for the supply of the work-house, 20 per cent. cheaper this year than the contract of last year, in consequence of the reduction of prices anticipated from the new tariff. On the other hand it seems that those who have hitherto produced those articles in this country will be injured by the alteration; but if you make a great reduction, not, I would say, in the amount of the poor-rates, but in the cost of living, on account of which the poor-rates have been kept high, those parties will derive considerable assistance from that reduction. I may observe, here, that there has been a tendency of late years to increase the poor-rates on account of the high prices of provisions. With respect to the colonial question, an hon. gentleman taunted me with the determination to urge all these propositions, without alteration, merely because I have a majority. But, because I am in

possession of a majority, I am inclined to listen to any reasonable propositions of amendment. In propounding an extensive commercial tariff of this kind, embracing 1,200 articles, I do not deny that some improvements may be suggested; and if, on reviewing the proposals I have made, I shall be convinced that I have laboured under an error, no sense of shame shall deter me from at once consenting to modify the proposition. This, however, I must say, I have paid great attention to what has been said during these debates, and I have not heard anything which has convinced me that what I have proposed is not a very great advantage. If the reduction of duties on the raw material, and on articles half-manufactured, and speaking generally, if the great principle of the tariff be adopted, I have a very confident hope that it will tend to the improvement of trade. [Viscount Howick: You retain the principle of differential duties?] If the noble viscount will allow me, I will explain that in due time. I cannot say that there ought to be no differential duties between the produce of the colonies and foreign countries. Nay, more, I must say, that if you look properly at the relations between yourselves and the colonies, you must consider your colonies entitled to be put on a different footing from foreign countries, and that it is only perfectly fair to give to articles of colonial production a preference in your markets over articles the produce of foreign countries. I am disposed to think even, that you ought to carry the principle of assimilation, if you can, so far, as to consider the colonies an integral part of the empire for all commercial purposes. I think the application of a discriminating duty on colonial articles, as compared with foreign, to be founded on sound principles. The arguments which have seemed to make a great impression against this doctrine have not convinced me. This, I say, that where a colonial and foreign article enters into competition, when the article is not produced in this country, there the differential duty tells in favour of the consumer. Suppose there are only two producers, the foreigner and the colony, and that the article is not at present one of colonial produce, such as that on which the right hon. gentleman has been so facetious, *Eau de Cologne*. There the differential duty may introduce fraud—that is a fair subject for consideration—but in respect to the preference of the colonial to the foreign article, the establishment of the differential duty will tell in favour of the consumer here. That is a principle upon which we have been long acting. That was the principle on which you admitted rough rice from the west coasts of Africa on more favourable terms than from America, and brought us into difficulty. The equalisation of the previously discriminating duties on East and West-India rum and sugar, proceeded on this principle; the differential duty on timber, on corn, on sugar, proceeded on this principle; and I will undertake to show you that, so far from this being a new principle, there are at this moment, sixty or seventy articles and more, on which this principle is acted upon. In reference to those articles which are *bonâ fide* the produce of our colonies, I will admit that a differential duty ought to be maintained, considering the disadvantages under which our colonies labour, as to the introduction of our manufactures; but, as to the application of a differential duty in every case to the colonies, I shall reserve to myself the full opportunity of considering the question, and if I shall think the reasons assigned for an alteration of the tariff in this respect valid, I shall have no difficulty in making that alteration. With respect to the duty on tobacco, the produce of the East Indies, I should wish also to reserve to myself a full opportunity of considering the objections that have been urged to my proposition, and I shall not have the slightest difficulty, if I see reason, to make any alteration. Sir, I am not aware that there is any other point on which it is necessary for me to make any observations. I am quite conscious of the difficulty of the task which I and those with whom I act have undertaken; there are many of these, and not merely in reference to the tariff. It is impossible to deny that on our accession to office, we found many difficulties before us. We found war in the north-west of India—we found the Chinese excited to hostilities against this country—we found—I deeply regret to say it—a spirit, I will not call it hostility, but of jealousy, existing between France and this country,—a spirit which has arisen of late years, and which is deeply to be deprecated. It is of the utmost importance that the good-will which had previously for some years existed between this country and France should be revived—a good understanding—an amicable relation between this country and France, and the increased commercial intercourse between them, is obviously of the utmost importance,

but, at the same time, it is felt that no concessions inconsistent with the honour or welfare of this country ought at any time to be made, even for the purpose of obtaining so desirable an end. As the causes of disunion are now removed, as the five powers, in respect to the Eastern question, or acting in concert, with united counsels, I earnestly hope that the good feeling which before existed between us and France will be completely revived. I think it impossible to deny that we found our relations with the United States in an unsatisfactory state, there having been for a long series of years unsettled causes of disunion, which we are doing our best to bring to a satisfactory determination. Above all, I think it cannot be denied, that we found the finances of this country in an unsatisfactory condition; and it has been our duty to apply ourselves to the proposal of those measures which we conceived to be the best calculated to replace those finances on a sound and proper basis. It has been made a charge against me, that I declared that the measure for the imposition of the Income-tax is not only proposed with the whole authority of the government, but that it is a measure in which the fate of the government is involved. On this point I might have thought it almost unnecessary to have made any declaration. Is it to be supposed possible that I could, in the present state of the affairs of this country, propose such a measure as that which I have proposed, without considering the fate of the government involved in the decision of the House of Commons upon it? To have made such a declaration appears to me to be scarcely necessary. I do propose it—I speak not of minor details, but of the measure itself, as the basis of the financial and commercial policy of the country; and as a measure which I never could have consented to propose if I did not manifest my conviction of its necessity by risking my fate as a minister on it. The more I consider the subject, the more deeply am I convinced that this measure, and the measures which accompany it, are necessary for the welfare of this country. I relinquished office in 1835, because I could not consistently acquiesce in a principle which I felt to be not founded in justice. I propose now a great measure, and if the House of Commons should overrule my proposal, I shall retire with perfect content, and with the consciousness that I have discharged the duty I owe to my country, by proposing a measure which has been characterised by one of my opponents as a bold, as a direct, as an honest measure. If these be the characteristics of it, it is suited to the exigencies of the present time. This is a period in which you do require that the measures proposed should be bold, direct, and honest. The measure may be rejected now. The attempts which are made to dissatisfy those interests whom I am supposed to have affected—to unite them in opposition to this Income-tax, may possibly prevail. I doubt it. I doubt whether there will not be on the part of the country a conviction, that the time is come when a vigorous exertion must be made—that the time is come when it is for the interest of property that property should bear the burden. My opinions may be overruled, and yet I have a confident belief that what occurred in 1835 may occur again; and that after the lapse of a short time—after making ineffectual attempts to repair the deficiency by other means—by resorting to indirect taxation, it will be ultimately acknowledged that the measure which I now propose is founded on reason and justice, and, though once rejected, ought to be adopted. But my conviction is that you, acting in consonance with the prevailing feeling of the country, will now adopt the measure, and that you will thereby give a proof to foreign countries—not that our resources are exhausted—but that you will not draw delusive distinctions between times of war and times of peace, but construe the times according to their necessities; and, disregarding plausible statements, you will, in a great financial exigency, adopt a bold, a direct, and an honest measure, which, so far from being misconstrued by foreign countries, will be hailed by them as a proof that the ancient vigour and energy of this people are yet alive, and that, whatever the difficulties they may be placed in, they are ready to triumph over them by the power of that vigour and that energy.

After several divisions, the question that the Chairman do report progress, was agreed to; the House resumed. Committee to sit again on Monday, April 4.

APRIL 4, 1842.

In reply to a question by Mr. J. Duncombe—

SIR R. PEEL said, the hon. gentleman had asked him whether it had ever crossed



his mind to postpone the consideration of the tariff, after he should have obtained the sense of the House in favour of an Income-tax. Without hesitation, he would answer that question by saying, that it never had crossed his mind to do any such thing. Some little delay had been found necessary before bringing on the discussion of the tariff, but he was sure the House would, when the matter was explained, readily acquiesce in the propriety of that delay. Many important interests would be seriously affected by the alterations proposed, and it was considered but just to give the parties an opportunity to have the subject duly weighed before the measure was introduced, in order that the tariff might undergo such changes as circumstances seemed to demand. He had great hope that, on Monday next, he should be able to introduce the tariff so amended; and he thought he could state with confidence that it would be considered by an immense majority of the House that, in the amended tariff, they had, in all its essentials, adhered to the principles of the original tariff. The delay between this and Monday arose solely from a wish on the part of the government to hear the statements of those affected; still he was justified in saying none of the alterations would be considered as a departure from the general principle of the measure. He trusted that because of these few days' delay, the House would not refuse its consent to this preliminary resolution on which to found his measure for an Income-tax. It was very important that he should have leave to bring in the bill, in which the details and machinery of the measure would be distinctly set forth. The amended tariff must be in possession of the House before they would be called on to vote for the second reading of this bill. If then the House should consider that there was any departure from the general principles of the tariff, after passing this resolution, it would be perfectly open to the House to withhold its assent to the second reading of this measure, and reject it altogether. With respect to the delay of a few days, he had already stated that such a notion had never entered into his head as that imputed to him by the hon. gentleman's observations opposite. It was quite clear that by the general reduction of the duties he had proposed, an important question arose as to the necessity of an Income-tax. The proposed reduction in the duties would involve a sum of £1,000,000 or £1,200,000; under which circumstances a little delay might not be considered unadvisable. He thought that hon. gentlemen could not accuse him of entertaining any such notion as, when endeavouring to get the House to pass this Income-tax, at the same time to be voluntarily engaged as a party to the postponement of the tariff. He had acted throughout with the most perfect good faith, and he did not think by the short postponement of the tariff, that they had any reason whatever for refusing their consent to this preliminary resolution, which was necessary to have passed, to form a foundation for the introduction of the bill. The House should bear in mind that it would have the fullest opportunity of recording their dissent against the principle of this bill in its future stages. The hon. gentleman, the member for Monmouth, had said, that the proposition of an Income-tax had met with universal execration. Now his (Sir R. Peel's) impression was totally and entirely different. He, on the contrary, considered that the proposition had been received with general and universal approbation throughout the kingdom. He would not, however, quarrel with the hon. gentleman on this subject; but he begged to assure the House that, from the numerous communications which had been made to him, he thought there was a very strong and general impression among the commercial, manufacturing, and trading communities, since the commercial tariff and commercial policy of the country was made known, that they hoped to derive the greatest advantages from the passing of the measure, which would conduce, in a great degree, to the interests and prosperity of the country. After having delayed proceeding with the measure until after the holidays, in order that that tremendous burst of indignation which had been anticipated by hon. gentlemen opposite, might be allowed to have effect, every opportunity had been given for this tremendous demonstration. And if hon. gentlemen opposite were satisfied at this loud explosion of public indignation on the subject, he could assure them he was equally well satisfied. They could then approach the consideration of the question with mutual satisfaction, as each party had gained their end.

The House then went into committee, and the first resolution was read and agreed to. The chairman having read the second branch of the resolution, a

discussion ensued as to whether the first resolution had been agreed to or not, several hon. members protesting that they were not aware the resolution had been put from the chair.

SIR R. PEEL: I hope the House will bear in mind the two speeches which have just been delivered on this subject; I mean the speech of my hon. friend who has just sat down (Mr. Hope Johnstone,) and that of the other hon. gentleman, the member for Finsbury, (Mr. Wakley.) The latter gentleman seems to hint that favour was shown to agricultural income, for the purpose of conciliating political opponents; and spoke of rumours being afloat, that the present proposition was brought forward for that purpose. On the other hand, my hon. friend behind me (Mr. Johnstone) contends, that it is unjust to the agricultural tenants to assume that their income ought to be estimated at one half the rental, and denies that such is the case, as regards that class of persons in Scotland. I hope that the conflicting opinions contained in these two speeches will serve to convince the House that it was the intention of government to attempt to deal out an equal measure of justice to all parties. I can, at all events, assure those hon. gentlemen, and also the House, which I hope will support me in carrying through the measure successfully, that in making the proposition there was no intention to conciliate any political parties in the country, the only object being to deal as fairly as possible between the producer and the consumer. I am relieved by the speech of the hon. member for Finsbury, from some difficulty which I might have, in answering various communications I have received, the whole tenor of which was, that the proposed financial scheme went wholly in favour of the manufacturer, and dealt with much injustice by the agriculturists. It will afford some satisfaction to the parties so complaining, to hear from the hon. member for Finsbury that there will be no material reduction in the price of corn, and that upon this point the agricultural classes are labouring under a delusion. The statements of the hon. gentleman are so completely different from the communications which I have received, that I owe him some acknowledgement for assisting me to dispel the alarm which existed on the part of the agricultural body. The hon. gentleman dwelt strongly upon the favour which the proposition conferred upon the agriculturists, as compared with the manner in which it would operate upon manufacturers, and the hard-ship to which those latter would be subjected by a scrutiny into their trade. I hold in my hand a statement made to the government on the part of the farmers with respect to the proposed financial plan. This document states that they have never, with the exception of one or two favourable years, made a profit on their farms, including the interest of their capital, nearly equal to half their rents, and that for the last six years there has been a succession of bad crops, which has made the return for their labour and outlay very inadequate. They conclude by saying, that they do not object to an Income-tax, that they are quite willing to pay their fair proportion of the necessary burdens of the State, and that all they desire is, that they should not be dealt with according to an arbitrary rule, different from that applied to other branches of the community, and which, in their own individual case, they think would be attended with injustice, affecting not only themselves but the public at large. The hon. gentleman opposite says I am unjust to the agricultural interest. To what part of them is that observation meant to apply? [Mr. Wallace: To my own country.] Oh! to your own country only. The manner in which, in former periods, the Income-tax has been applied to those engaged in agricultural pursuits, has been, by calculating the profits of the farmer on a certain proportion which they have been assumed to bear to the rent. That proportion I reduce from three-fourths to one-half, from a perfect conviction that the rent of the farmer has been raised in proportion to his profits, and because I do believe that reduction to be consistent with justice. I am quite willing to admit, that there are circumstances in respect to Scotland, which may make some difference. There are modifications in the act of 1806, which apply to the Scottish farmers. Allowances were made to them on account of the exemption of the land from the payment of tithe. There are also circumstances, I am ready to admit, as to the mode in which county and local charges are borne in England and Scotland, which require some consideration. All I can state is, that I wish to put the Scottish farmer as nearly as may be on the same footing as the English farmer, which is, I think, demanded by justice. I apprehend the peculiarity of

the case is, that local charges in that country being generally borne by the landlord, and in England by the tenant, that constitutes a reason why a difference was made in the former act; and I readily admit, that it would not be quite fair to tax the tenants of the two countries in precisely the same ratio. With respect to the general question of imposing this tax, I find throughout the country, as I have said in the course of this evening, a strong sense of the necessity of some vigorous exertion for the restoration of the national finances. I find also, I must say, that interest felt in the maintenance of public credit, which induces all parties to come forward with cheerfulness, and take their share in the burdens which may be necessary for this purpose. When it comes to the question of imposing taxes, I must say, I think it highly creditable to this country that there is a generally prevailing inclination to make an exertion for the maintenance of national honour and good faith. I must say also, of the agricultural interest in particular, that I have found among them the greatest willingness to bear their part of taxation, and I am perfectly certain that the prevalence of that feeling will ensure ultimate success to this attempt to equalise the expenditure with the income of government. At the same time, however, I must say, that concurrently with that general acquiescence, there is on the part of every interest in the country a universal desire to remonstrate against any interference with them, each saying that they are the part of the community which is most hardly treated by the tax. The hon. gentleman opposite says, for instance, that there is no reduction in the protection to articles of food, corresponding with the reduction which I propose in articles of manufacture. It was impossible for me, in dealing with interests so extensive and so complicated, not to anticipate that I should receive remonstrances of that kind. But the consolation which I and my colleagues have is this—the consciousness that in dealing with those interests we have attempted to do justice, and not to conciliate support. The hon. gentleman the member for Manchester said at one time that he was perfectly convinced this tax would be a permanent one, and at another time he said he was perfectly convinced the outcry against it would be so great that a repeal must immediately take place. He said I had promised a repeal of the tax at the end of five years. I begged to remind him of what I really did say. I said I thought a fair experiment could not be made with respect to the tariff in less than five years; but at the same time I proposed that the duration of the tax should be limited to three years, and I reserved to parliament the full power of determining whether or not the tax should be continued. That was the statement I made; but I am perfectly certain, if the tax should receive that strong opposition with which I am threatened by gentlemen on the other side, and if the general sense of the country be decidedly against it, that, at the end of three years, parliament will be unwilling to continue it; but if no such aversion to it should be manifested, then I must say, I hope, that at the end of the period of three years, parliament will consent to the continuance of it for such a period as the public exigencies may require, and it will be for parliament itself to determine the length of that period on a comparison of the advantages of the tax with its inconveniences. Feeling every confidence that the reduction which I propose in the protective duties will afford ample scope to the development of the energies of the community, I entertain the hope, that unless circumstances not now foreseen should arise, there may be an opportunity of putting an end to this tax at the expiration of the period of five years to which I have referred, but I have a very strong impression that its imposition in the meantime will be for the general benefit of the whole country. With respect to the reduction of the protective duties on corn, I have always said that I thought there ought to be a corresponding reduction in the protection on manufactured articles. I propose a reduction of the protection on all articles, almost indiscriminately, on corn and provisions, as well as on manufactured goods. I entertain now the confident belief that there will be, from the combined result of all these measures, that which I think will be highly desirable to this country,—a reduction in the general expenditure of the people on articles necessary to their subsistence and to their comforts. We shall then hold out an increased temptation to gentlemen to remain at home, instead of spending their money abroad. I entertain the confident belief that, speaking generally, there will be on account of the reduction in the price of living—a reduction, be it observed, in the benefit of which the agriculturist will participate equally with the manufacturer and the labourer—a pecuniary saving in

the amount of weekly, monthly, and annual expenditure, which will compensate, very nearly, if not altogether, for those sums, whatever they may be, which individuals are called upon to contribute on account of the tax of 3 per cent. on their incomes. Sir, I hope that this House, after having discussed the subject, will come to the conclusion which I have formed, and which further reflection has confirmed, that the present situation of the country does require a vigorous exertion to be made, and that the House will consent to enable us to make the experiment of restoring our finances to prosperity, by a tax on the income of the country. If they resolve on an Income-tax, then I hope they will adopt the principle of that Income-tax which has been in force in former years. I hope they will feel, that there can be no distinction expedient in time of peace, in respect of the nature of the income taxed, which might not be appealed to in time of war; and in establishing an Income-tax for a limited time, I hope they will take special care not to establish any precedent which would have a tendency to impair the efficiency of that instrument which you may be compelled to call into action in time of war, and on which your chief reliance may, perhaps, be placed, for enabling you to make the income of the country in time of war in some degree correspond with its expenditure. I trust the House will never lose sight of the importance of keeping this principle un infringed, and if an Income-tax is to be taken, whether in time of peace or of war, I hope the country will see the justice of a proposal to subject the income of individuals to equal taxation. If, in time of peace, you make exceptions in favour of persons holding a life interest, or holding offices, I do say you will be establishing a precedent to which in time of war an appeal may be made with equal justice. I should be inclined, Sir, to doubt the policy of an Income-tax at all, if you could not have resort to it without establishing a precedent which might lead to the most dangerous consequences.

Lord John Russell having replied, the second and third resolutions were agreed to, and the House resumed; report to be brought up on Thursday.

## CORN IMPORTATION BILL.

APRIL 5, 1842.

The House in Committee on the 9th clause, relating to the averages. Mr. Childers moved the following clause, in substitution of clause 29:—"That from the passing of this bill up to the 1st day of May, 1843, the duty to be paid on the importation of foreign corn shall be regulated by the averages of those towns only which have hitherto made returns in accordance with the act of 9 Geo. IV.; but that from and after the 1st day of May, 1843, the duty shall be regulated by the averages of all the towns named in the schedule attached to the present bill, unless parliament shall in the meantime otherwise direct."

SIR R. PEEL said, that the hon. member opposite appeared to wish that the existing towns should be retained, and yet he proposed to leave out the only clause by which any towns whatever could be used for the purposes of the measure. If the object of the hon. member were to keep the law as it now existed, with reference to the towns at which averages were to be taken, why did he not move in accordance with such a purpose? If he aimed at keeping the law unaltered, the mode he took of doing so was extraordinary. [Mr. Childers proposed omitting all the words in the present clause for the purpose of substituting another form of words.] The ninth clause was the portion of the bill which the hon. member proposed to leave out altogether. He begged the House to observe what was proposed to be enacted by this part of the bill; the clause ran in these words:—"And whereas it is necessary, for regulating the amount of such duties, that effectual provision should be made for ascertaining from time to time the average prices of British corn; be it therefore enacted, that weekly returns of the purchases and sales of British corn shall be made, collected, and transmitted, in the manner hereinafter directed, in and from the cities and towns named in the schedule of cities and towns annexed to this act."

Now, by the proposition of the hon. member, it was intended to get rid of the averages altogether; in that he could not acquiesce. In support of his argument

the hon. member said, that when the price of corn was 66s. or 67s. no duty whatever ought to be charged, and that her Majesty's government in bringing forward the present measure ought to have so modified the provisions of the bill, as that no duty should be chargeable at a price of 65s. or 66s. Surely that doctrine was fatal to the principle of a fixed duty, for the supporters of a fixed duty would impose a tax of 8s. or 10s. at all periods, and in every state of the market; the 8s. duty was a penalty attaching to the importation of corn under all circumstances. The hon. member was of opinion that the importation of corn should be free when the price rose to 66s.; the government measure provided that it should be so when the price rose to 73s.; but the fixed duty scheme would lay on a tax of 8s. or 10s. even when the price was as high as 73s., or at any price whatever; that certainly must be the effect of a fixed duty. [Mr. Childers said, that under the plan of a fixed duty, corn would never reach to such a price as 72s.] But suppose that it should reach such a price, what did hon. members say to that? Could they deny that if it reached 78s., the fixed duty would be the same as if the price were only 53s.? That in a certain state of things it would never reach 73s. was a mere matter of speculation, which it was very easy to suggest to the hon. member opposite in order to assist him in getting out of the dilemma in which he had placed himself. With respect to the additional towns at which the averages were to be taken, it was a mistake to suppose that the addition of them, or their being wholly omitted, would have the effect of raising the price of corn; the addition would not raise the averages, it would make the system more just. It had been said on the other side, that frauds were practised in both ways—were practised for the purpose of raising prices, and for the purpose of depressing them. On that he should observe, that he had multiplied towns for the purpose of preventing fraud. But then, the hon. member contended, that one fraud balanced another, and that the system, in its working, righted itself. The House surely would not say that one injustice ought to set against another. He did not say, that the frauds were confined to one side, they might be found on both, but he trusted that the effect of the measure which he introduced, would be to prevent sudden fluctuations. Much had been said of the frauds, but he entertained no doubt that they had been greatly exaggerated; admitting, however, that some frauds had been practised, he relied upon the gradual decline of the duty to prevent their continuance, and there might be many faults in the system, besides the frauds. He had been asked, why he had selected the towns contained in the schedule; to that his reply was, that he had selected those towns in fifteen of the chief agricultural and manufacturing districts. If the object was to ascertain what were the real prices of corn, the obvious mode of accomplishing that object could not be any other than to select the principal corn markets of the kingdom. It was true, that he had proposed to continue the Income-tax for three years, then to cease, unless parliament should otherwise determine; but that could form no reason for adopting the principle of the hon. member for one year, unless altered by parliament. He therefore adhered to the proposition he had made as it now stood.

After a short discussion, Mr. Childers signified his intention of not dividing the House till the 29th clause came under consideration.

Mr. Aglionby wished to ask the right hon. baronet whether any new expenses would be incurred by the addition to the number of towns from which the averages were taken, and whether it would not cause an increase, in some shape or another, in the salaries of the excise officers?

Sir Robert Peel:—I am quite sure that if, in procuring a correct account of the averages, any reasonable expenses are incurred, the House will be willing to provide for those expenses. Therefore I do not urge it as a strong argument in favour of the proposed alteration that there will be any saving of the public money produced by the change. There will, however, be such a saving, more particularly when certain existing interests expire. The expense of collecting the averages is at present about £7,000 a year. Now, I think that if excise-officers can assist in performing the duty, the public, by whom they are employed, have a fair claim upon their time. I do not think, therefore, that these new duties will lead to any additional expenses in the way of compensation. But, however this compensation may be awarded, the expenses of collecting the averages will, on the whole, be

less under the new system than under the old. I must say, after the statement made by the hon. gentleman, about the price of wheat in the Carlisle market, my opinion of the judgment of Carlisle purchasers will not be higher than it has previously been. Of course, were the qualities of the two bushels of wheat different, the hon. gentleman would have stated it. We are, therefore, informed, that while one bushel of a given article was sold for 3s. 4d., another bushel, within a few yards of it, brought 10s. [Mr. Aglionby: That was the case.] Well, then, it appears that purchasers in Carlisle market, having the sacks open, paid 10s. a bushel for wheat, while within ten yards they could buy an article, the quality of which was equal, for 3s. 4d.

Mr. Aglionby begged to explain that there was a difference in quality. What he wished to show was, that in the same district the quality of corn was so totally different, that one bushel brought only 3s. 4d., while another fetched 10s.

Sir R. Peel: Oh, we on this side of the House understood the hon. gentleman to mean that the qualities were the same, and that in the same market the price of corn was subject to that great variation, and we did, of course, think it most extraordinary that so great a difference of price should prevail between articles equal in quality. With respect to fraud on the averages, I think that under certain circumstances it has been practised to some extent, more extensively, probably, during the last three or four years than previously, and, if there be any great and sudden variation in the duty, these frauds or combinations with a view to influence prices would increase. I use the term fraud as it has been before applied to these transactions, though I cannot myself give them exactly that designation. They are, in fact, speculations entered into, with a view to gaining a profit. The extent of these frauds I likewise think has been exaggerated. Its existence I do not deny, but it has not been committed to the extent mentioned by the hon. gentleman opposite in addressing his constituents. My opinion is that, as was very justly remarked by the noble lord (Worsley), the addition of 140 new towns from which returns of the averages are to be made, will not operate as a complete prevention of frauds; but the addition of these towns will have a further tendency to prevent frauds of another kind—not that of diminishing the duty by raising the price, but the fraud of raising the duty and diminishing the price, which has been practised when large quantities of corn have been sold and parted with for the advantage of high duties. I do not think it is correct to state that the price of corn always varies in proportion to the difference in quality; but the quality is doubtless a material element in determining the price. I should, I believe, be able to show that in counties which are not great corn producers, prices are higher than in those where the best wheat is grown. In Staffordshire, for instance, an inland, manufacturing county, far removed from the influence of operations in foreign corn, the price is higher than in the best wheat-growing counties. I should not be surprised to learn, that in Essex or Northamptonshire the price of corn was higher than in Kent, a maritime county, with the advantage of a fine soil. Much reliance has been placed on the fact, that the wheat in the Liverpool market is of an inferior description, but let it not be forgotten that the greater the influence of those towns, the general trade of which is in the inferior description of wheat, the more diminished will be the influence of those whose trade lies in inferior wheat, from Ireland, Scotland, or elsewhere. An hon. gentleman has produced two samples, one of Scotch and the other of English wheat. Now, if this (pointing to a parcel before him) be a fair specimen of Scotch wheat—and some indignation would, perhaps, be expressed at its being called so—I would again remind you that the more you increase the influence of the good wheat upon the average, the more you diminish that of the inferior; and the more you increase the influence of the inferior the more you diminish that of the superior. And I must say, the introduction of the new towns will have a tendency to increase the influence of the superior article. In order fully to carry out perfectly the principle of the hon. gentleman opposite, he ought to require that, in half the towns, the old inspectors should be retained for a year, in order to ascertain fairly what would be the effect of the increased vigilance of the excise-officers. I do hope that on the whole the House will concur with government, in endeavouring to make the machinery as perfect as they can, and sanction the addition of the new towns to the places from which the averages are to be collected.

Clauses to the 26th were agreed to.

Lord Worsley proposed that the word "ten" be inserted, instead of six, in Clause 27.

Sir R. Peel said, that various propositions on this point had been submitted to the government. Some desired to extend the period to eight weeks, some to ten, others to twelve, whilst certain persons would even prolong it to fifteen. After carefully considering these suggestions, the impression on his mind certainly was, that the proposed extension of time would not operate as a check on fraud; but that, on the contrary, the speculator would derive an advantage from the ability to pour in corn for a more extended period. He had also formed the opinion, that the alteration would operate injuriously to the consumer, by keeping up the duty at a time when the necessities of the country required an importation of corn; and further, he thought, that it would act injuriously to the producers, by subjecting them to a competition at lower rates for a more considerable period than at present. On the whole, therefore, he could not but think that it would be safer to adhere to the six weeks, as proposed in the bill now before them. He could mention instances where the extended period would have a very injurious operation, but as this was a question of detail, on which it was for the committee to decide, he would content himself with the statement he had made of his reason for adhering to the system now existing.

The committee divided on the question that the blank be filled up with the word "six:" Ayes 242; Noes 37; Majority 205.

The schedule as amended was agreed to. The House resumed. Report to be brought up on the next day.

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#### COPYRIGHT.

APRIL 6, 1842.

Viscount Mahon moved the recommittal of this bill. The House having gone into Committee, clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to. On the 3rd clause being read, Mr. Macaulay moved an amendment, to the effect, "That the copyright of every book should endure for the term of forty-two years, or for the natural life of the author."

SIR ROBERT PEEL did not wish to give a vote without stating generally the opinion to which he had come upon the arguments he had heard upon the subject. He had always felt great doubts upon it. He had not hitherto given a vote upon the question, but had resolved to listen with great impartiality to the arguments on both sides, and then to form his own conclusion upon those arguments. His impression hitherto had been, that with respect to the vast majority of cases, the existing protection was sufficient. There might be cases with regard to works of authors, in which some additional protection for literature might be necessary. He had always listened with favour to that suggestion which proposed that in special cases exceptions might be made; and that in the case of great and distinguished men, where a peculiar hardship might arise if the term of the copyright were not extended, some public authority should have the power to extend it. Taking that view of the case, he had moved for a return of the cases in which the Privy Council had extended patent rights. As there appeared to be a tolerably general acquiescence as to the principle upon which the House ought to proceed, and that there ought to be some legislative measure on the subject, he should not press the views upon which he had hitherto felt inclined to act. Having heard the speeches of his noble friend and of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Macaulay), he thought the argument of the right hon. gentleman as to a preference to be given to a certain period of forty-two years, or the life of the author, was an argument which carried conviction with it. The later works of an author were usually superior to his earlier productions, as the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Macaulay) had established, by reference only to the two names of Dryden and Pope; it was in the latter works, that the public had most interest. At the same time he admitted the weight of the argument founded upon the necessity for an author to provide for his family after death, and on this account he should

be glad, if possible, to combine the two propositions, and besides the forty-two years of the amendment, to give an author's family a right for seven years after his death. If, however, the question were only between the proposition of his noble friend and the amendment of the right hon. gentleman, he must vote for the latter.

Amendment carried. Lord Mahon then moved the insertion of the words, "and for the further term of seven years, commencing at the time of the authors death." Agreed to, as were also the clauses to 14, and the House resumed.

## CORN IMPORTATION—REGULATION OF WAGES.

APRIL 7, 1842.

On the motion that this bill be read a third time, Mr. Cobden rose and moved the following amendment:—"That inasmuch as this House has repeatedly declared, by its votes and the reports of its committees, that it is beyond the power of parliament to regulate the wages of labour in this country, it is inexpedient and unjust to pass a law to regulate, with a view to raise unnaturally, the prices of food."

SIR ROBERT PEEL assured the hon. gentleman (Mr. Cobden) that he had listened to him, upon that occasion, as upon all others, with great attention, and though he differed from him in the conclusions which he drew, he could not impute to him any unfairness in the manner of advancing his views. He hoped, however, after the lengthened discussion which this question had already undergone, that the hon. gentleman would not think him guilty of disrespect if he abstained from entering at large upon a topic which would necessarily have the effect of opening the whole subject of the Corn-laws again. The hon gentleman's argument went to this, that there ought to be no duty whatever upon the importation of foreign corn, that the whole of the duty ought to be abolished, and that corn, under all circumstances, should be admitted duty free. That was plainly the hon. gentleman's object, because the terms of his resolution applied as strongly against the principle of a fixed duty, as against the principle of a sliding-scale. No gentleman, therefore, who thought that a fixed duty was necessary for the protection of our domestic agriculture, would be at liberty to vote in favour of this amendment. It appeared to him that the proposed law would have the effect of facilitating the importation of foreign corn, and of contributing to regulate its price. At any rate, by taking away the sudden fluctuations in the amount of duty, it would diminish the chances of great gains being made by mere speculators and gamblers in corn. The hon. gentleman, therefore, could not justly charge him with showing any disposition to conciliate the interest of those—parties with whom he had no concern—whose political opinions he knew nothing of, and by the promotion of whose interests he could not gain any advantage. The question had been so fully debated on previous occasions, that he was sure the House would excuse him for not going farther into the subject on the present occasion. He had proposed a modification of the law—a modification which he believed a beneficial one, and which, he trusted, was now about to receive the sanction of the House. He hoped that the hon. gentleman would not consider it disrespectful to himself, nor the House to them, if, referring to the statements which he made when the general question was before the House, he now stated that he did not consider it necessary to enter into any lengthened discussion in regard to the particular proposal of the hon. gentleman.

The amendment was negatived, and the bill read a third time.

Mr. French then moved the following question:—"That so much of this act, as allows the importation into Ireland of flour, the produce and manufacture of any foreign country, or of any British possession out of Europe, shall not commence and take effect until from and after the expiration of six calendar months from the passing hereof."

Sir R. Peel: I propose to submit all the agricultural interests in this country to immediate competition with foreign produce, and I see no reason why there should be an exception in the case of Ireland. I will take the case of oats. Complaints have been made, that the duty I proposed is not sufficient to protect Irish



oats from foreign competition, but still oats are to be open to foreign competition, and no lapse of time is to be given to the grower to secure his interests. Nay, more,—I think he should not possess any such advantage; and because it is of great importance that this law should be brought into operation at once, and in all cases, unless where some special or peculiar reason for a different course may exist, I doubt whether the application of the hon. gentleman, even if granted, would benefit Ireland, although he says that hitherto the Irish millers have enjoyed a monopoly in grinding flour for exportation. But it should be recollected that we are going to admit foreign flour at lower rates of duty, and consequently, that the Irish millers can no longer expect to possess the advantage they have heretofore had of the English markets. The hon. gentleman seems to be alarmed as to the import of flour from the United States, but those who sit near him can tell him that he has no ground for alarm, and that the increase of flour from the United States will not more than correspond with the remission of the duty. I should be subjecting myself to the imputation of partiality if I were to except one interest, when, by my bill, I am subjecting every other agricultural interest to competition with the foreigner. I must oppose the proposition of the hon. member; for, in a measure which concerns so many interests, I do not think I ought to make an exception in favour of one particular interest.

Question negatived. Mr. Wakley then moved a clause, which was brought up and read a first time. On the motion that it be read a second time,

Sir R. Peel said, the proposition required a great deal of consideration. The clause would have no effect in preventing the use of bad food. The other night, two specimens of corn had been produced, which had been sold in the London market on the same day; one, of a sample of very superior corn, had been sold at 80s., the other, a very inferior sample, had been sold at 36s. The effect of the proposition of the hon. gentleman would not be to exclude that inferior sample, and those two specimens had been each an extreme. The effect of the clause would be very considerable upon the averages. If he were to select the finest bushel of corn he could find, and sold it in the market, he would have the opportunity, under this clause, of excluding all the corn from the returns of sales, which did not amount to a third of that price. He might not sell this *bonâ fide*; but, if it were stated to be sold, that was to govern the market. This was really opening a wide field for speculation. If they were to attempt to lay down such a rule as that, all corn sold below 30s. or below 40s., should not enter into the averages, the effect might be calculated; but to say that it should be in the power of an individual to sell a bushel of corn, so selected and picked out, and that he should thereby exclude all the returns of corn sold that was not a third of that price, was opening a wide field for fraud. If the highest priced corn sold did not fetch more than 70s., then a very low-priced corn would be admitted; but if a fair specimen of corn were sold, which brought 90s. or 100s., such low priced corn could not be admitted. Such a clause would produce the greatest uncertainty, and with such a power as this given for influencing the averages, the most injurious effects might be produced.

This motion was also negatived, and the bill passed.

## INCOME-TAX—REPORT.

APRIL 8, 1842.

SIR ROBERT PEEL moved the order of the day for the bringing up of the Report of the Committee of Ways and Means.

Lord John Russell, after vindicating the policy of the late government, moved a resolution, showing the amount of taxes which had been repealed since the termination of the last war, and deprecating the proposed measure, which it described as most objectionable in its inquisitorial nature, unequal in its pressure, not called for by public necessity, and therefore not advisable.

A long and animated debate ensued, and during the cheers and counter-cheers which followed an impressive and eloquent speech from Mr. Sheil, Mr. Brotherton moved the adjournment of the debate.

Sir R. Peel rose, and was about to address the House when he was interrupted by cries of "adjourn," and it was intimated that the adjournment of the debate had been moved.

Sir R. Peel: Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask whether or not any motion was made before I rose?

The Speaker said, that Mr. Brotherton had moved the adjournment of the debate.

Sir R. Peel: I wish, Sir, to speak to the main question. I can, of course, speak to the question of adjournment, but I rose after the right hon. gentleman, under the impression that no motion had been made previously. I was about to address myself, therefore, to the main question.

The Speaker said, that the hon. member for Salford rose and moved the adjournment immediately after the right hon. member had concluded his speech, and he put the question as soon as possible. When the right hon. baronet rose to speak, he asked the hon. member for Salford if he persevered in his motion, and the hon. member answered in the affirmative.

Sir R. Peel: If I address myself to the main question, it may look like evasion, although I presume I could, consistently with order, enter into the merits of the main question; but I should have to allege that I did so for the purpose of showing that the House ought not to adjourn. If in doing that I could be supposed to show a bad precedent, or if it would appear that by that course I should be guilty of evasion, I will not, in the position that I stand, condescend to any such evasion. I therefore, ask you, Sir, whether I ought in strictness to confine myself to the question of adjournment?

The Speaker said, that of late years it had not been deemed necessary to adhere strictly to the question of adjournment under such circumstances.

Sir R. Peel: Sir, if I am in order, if I am not chargeable with evasion, or any bad precedent—I will then speak to the main question. With unabated confidence in the expediency and in the necessity of the proposal which I have made, I call on the House and upon the country to take an energetic and decided step, for the purpose of rescuing this country from the calamity and disgrace which a continued indifference to and connivance at our financial difficulties are calculated to produce. You rest your opposition to this measure upon double grounds. You say that I establish no sufficient necessity to warrant the proposal which I have made, but you also say, that even if the circumstances of the country were such, as to call for a decided step, some other course should be pursued than resorting to direct taxation; and you charge me with exaggerating the financial difficulties of the country for the purpose of carrying this measure. Now, I shall again repeat to you and to the country, what the real position of this country is with respect to financial difficulties. I say this, that in the year 1836 (the Melbourne government having been restored to office in 1835), you came into the administration of the finances of two great empires under the dominion of her Majesty, one of which was this United Kingdom, and the other the great empire in the East, where 100,000,000 of subjects are subjected to our sway. [Confusion; cries of "divide."] I hope, Sir, that I may be allowed to proceed in the performance of my public duty, and in vindicating myself against the charge of overrating the financial difficulties which we have to meet. In 1836, you had the administration of the affairs of two great empires, and the finances which you had to administer were then in this condition. In this country, there was a surplus of revenue over expenditure of £1,376,000, and in India, there was a surplus of revenue over expenditure of £1,556,000. You entered, therefore, on the performance of your duties, with a net surplus in the finance of the two empires of £3,000,000 of income above expenditure. How have you left it? Am I overrating difficulties. Well, you found in that year (1836) a surplus of revenue of £3,000,000, and you left a deficit of £5,000,000, in the year ending the 5th of April, 1842. The financial deficit of the United Kingdom in that year is £2,570,000, and the deficit revenue of India for the year ending at that period is £2,430,000. Therefore I am justified in stating that you found, when you came to administer those finances, a surplus of revenue, amounting to £3,000,000, and in the year on which you quitted office, you left a deficit, which it is my duty to attempt to supply, of no less than £5,000,000. The difference between the finances of the country, therefore, from the time you undertook the charge of those finances, until you quitted office, is

against the country, and against its credit, £8,000,000. If, then, I have substantiated that difference, and the existence of that deficiency, have I overrated the necessities of the country? You do not believe, perhaps, that the financial difficulties of India will recoil upon you; but if you think so, I shall convince you that the time is approaching when you will know by experience that such a position on your part cannot be maintained. You commenced in 1836, in a time of peace, with a surplus of £3,000,000, and notwithstanding that, you have left the country with the present deficiency of £5,000,000. Sir, there was a minister of this country who, in speaking of the financial affairs of it, delivered this opinion—"To enter upon the financial year with a deficiency of £1,000,000, was what he hoped no minister of this great nation would ever consent to, and no House of Commons would ever sanction. The necessary consequence of such a proceeding would"—this minister was speaking of a deficit of only £1,000,000,—“The necessary consequence of such a proceeding would be, to make the faith of the country suspected at home, to diminish its reputation abroad, and to place us in such a situation, as would necessarily deprive us of the high and noble position which we had hitherto held among the nations of the world.”

The minister who delivered those sentiments, in speaking of the deficit of a single million, is reported to have been Lord John Russell. You began with a surplus: you acknowledge that the existence of a surplus is necessary to the maintenance of public credit. Proposals are made, which find most eloquent advocates, for the remission of taxation. You had then, I say, a surplus amounting to a million and a half. A proposal was made to reduce taxation—taxation, too, bearing injuriously on the lower classes—bearing injuriously on the industry—bearing injuriously also on the property, of the country: but the minister, sensible of the evil of having a deficiency in the revenue—of having a deficiency for a single year of a single million, in the amount of his income to meet his expenditure, told you, that no minister fit to govern this great country would commence his financial year with a deficit; for, if he did, he would diminish the security of credit at home, and the respect due to the country abroad, and would thus deprive us of that high station which we had so long enjoyed among the nations of the world. Now, when I present to you a deficit of £3,000,000, in your expenditure at home, and show you that you have a deficit of £2,500,000, in addition, in another hemisphere, you tell me that I am over-rating the difficulties of the country. And I tell you, that that is the natural consequence of conniving at such a state of things as you have for some time past been enduring. And then you tell me in turn, that after having incurred an enormous national debt to the amount of £800,000,000 there is no great harm in making to that debt the small addition of £2,000,000 more. Do not deceive yourselves—do not attempt to deceive others, by such pretences: be not deterred from making the exertions which the occasion requires; for if you are, then will the prophecy of the noble lord be fulfilled, that the credit of the country will be suspected, and you will descend with inconceivable rapidity from your present high and exalted station. “Oh, but we have met with no disaster,” say the hon. gentlemen on the other side. No disaster! When had you before, in the whole cycle of your history, any disaster like that which had befallen you in Afghanistan? A disaster, which I admit is not irreparable—a disaster, which I trust will be speedily repaired by the spirit and vigour of your counsels, and by the gallant exertions of your armies: but when did you ever read in the history of England of such a wholesale slaughter as that which has recently befallen your forces, and which a single individual has escaped to narrate. His letter has appeared in all the newspapers. Here is what that individual writes:—“My life has been saved in a most wonderful manner, and I am the only European who has escaped from the Cabul army (although we have heard of two having been taken by the enemy, it is very doubtful if they will be spared). Two natives only have reached this place, making, with myself, three persons out of an army of 13,000.”

Do you yet know the whole extent of your loss in Afghanistan? Have you not lost 10,000 men since the commencement of your operations in that country? The loss, I again say, is not irreparable; every effort ought to be made, and every effort shall be made, to restore it. And shall we not have the means of doing so? How can we judge of the moral effects of these occurrences? Recollect what efforts it

may be necessary for you to make for the purpose of retaining that great empire, which depends less upon your physical force, than upon the moral power which you exercise over its numberless inhabitants. If some decisive effort must be made for the rescue of the troops who are still left in Afghanistan—if some strenuous measures must be taken for the reparation of that great disaster—if some glorious feat of arms must be achieved for the retrieval of that temporary slur which has been cast upon your commanders and your forces—if that must be done, cannot you perceive the positive necessity of your making here at home some vigorous exertions for the sake of supporting government in those efforts which you admit that it is absolutely requisite that the government should take. Have I said enough to convince you that the difficulties under which we now labour, and which we are bound speedily to remove, may require on your parts great exertions—I mean great exertions both in a military and in a financial point of view; and shall I receive as a sufficient answer to my statement, an extract from the Queen's speech at the commencement of the session, stating that we have no European war to dread? Because dangers are at a distance, may we safely disregard them? With these disasters before us, let us now proceed to consider, what is the measure to which this country will resort in order to meet them, or what is the measure which, when proposed by government, it will consent to adopt! There is now a deficit of three millions in your expenditure at home. Do you entertain any sanguine hope that in the course of the next year, in the present complexion of your affairs, you can by any reduction in your estimates or your establishments, accomplish a saving to that amount? I do not think that any man is sanguine enough to entertain such an idea. I also think that your deficiency is not a temporary deficiency. Now, if you are determined not to resort to direct taxation, are you prepared to submit to an indefinite amount of indirect taxation as a substitute for it? I have proposed to you a tax on income, from which all persons whose income is less than £150 a year are to be exempt. I propose to you a tax which has hitherto been reserved for time of war, but, as the hon. member for Coventry justly observed, it would be mere miserable political pedantry, to insist that war was the only necessity in which an Income-tax would be justifiable. The question really is, whether the political necessity is of such magnitude and urgency as justifies its imposition. Now, the noble lord proposes, as a substitute for that Income-tax, the budget of last year. Now, the noble lord never could have proposed that substitute under the notion that war was the only cause which could justify the imposition of an Income-tax. The noble lord could never have thought that there might not be a political necessity in time of peace,—and I speak not only of an European peace, but of a general peace,—when all the political horizon was undisturbed by a cloud—in which an Income-tax might not be perfectly justifiable. Because, in the year 1833, when Lord Althorp was beaten upon the malt-tax, and when a proposal was made for the repeal of the house and window-tax, Lord Althorp proposed, and the noble lord supported, an abstract resolution to this effect, that if a deficit in the revenue were caused by that resolution, the only alternative to which the government could resort would be a property-tax. Yes! a property-tax. That was the expedient proposed by the government of which the noble lord was a member, for the purpose of dissuading the House of Commons from reducing the house and window-tax. The property-tax was allied with an Income-tax, and in the resolution it was stated, not that you would resort to the sugar duties—not that you would resort to the timber duties—not that you would resort to the corn duties—but that your only alternative was a property and an Income-tax. When a great party supported that resolution, is it possible either for you who were its leader, or for you who were its members, now to turn round and tell me that a property-tax is not a justifiable tax in time of peace? Could I, after reading what Sir Henry Parnell, your chairman of a finance committee, has placed upon record in his different financial works—could I, after reading the opinions of Lord Althorp and of Mr. P. Thomson, upon that occasion, believe, that as a necessary consequence of my present proposal, I should be exposed to this determined opposition from the different members of the late administration? “Oh,” said the noble lord, “you might have had recourse to other measures of taxation; you might, for instance, have placed a legacy-duty upon real property.” Suppose that I had argued with myself thus:—“Let me consider the propriety of imposing a legacy-duty on real property. If I propose

it, shall I have the support of the late government?" Well, what do I find upon record in the debates of the year 1840, on that very proposition which the noble lord now suggests that I might have brought forward? I find his own Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the year 1840, using this language:—"My hon. friend (Mr. Hume) says, that instead of taking the taxes as I propose, the government ought to have moved a legacy-duty on real property. I will not go into the details or the modes in which my hon. friend proposes to put that tax on, because my objection is to the principle of the tax."

That, I repeat, was the language of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the year 1840. Supposing, then, that I had now brought forward this measure, and had calculated upon the imposition of a legacy-duty on real property as one of the means of meeting the deficiency for the present year, should I not have been met immediately with the suggestion that the property-tax would be a much more expedient tax to propose? Should I not have been told that the late Chancellor of the Exchequer had placed on record his opposition, not only to the detail, but also to the principle of the measure? The noble lord, I repeat, suggests two measures in lieu of mine—one for the remission of the duties upon corn, another for the imposition of a legacy-duty on landed property. [An hon. member: An increase of the assessed taxes.] Ay, and an increase of the assessed taxes. I hope that my agricultural friends, who have been described by the noble lord this evening as having heads partaking of the heavy nature of the clay which they cultivate, will not forget the nature of these three proposals. And here I may be permitted to step aside for a moment, and ask, if I had spoken in such terms of any manufacturing opponents of mine—if I had used such language of any of the manufacturers who speak disparagingly of me, what would have been said of my arrogance and presumption? If I had spoken of any class of men as the noble lord spoke of the agricultural class, which has offended him, I wonder what would have been the terms of reproach heaped upon me for the use of such contumelious language? I confess that I am surprised, when I hear from the hon. gentleman opposite, that my agricultural friends feel it necessary to vindicate themselves, because they have given me their support. At one time, they are charged with having broken the pledges which they gave to their constituents; and yet the sound of that charge is scarcely extinct, when I am told, as I was in the debate last night, that in bringing forward my new Corn-law, I had considered exclusively the advantage of the agricultural interest. Did you not, when I brought this Corn-law forward, receive it with insult and derision? Why, you cannot charge me with being subservient to the agricultural interest, and at the same time charge the agricultural interest in this House with having forfeited all the pledges which they gave to their constituents on the hustings, because they were too subservient to me. These two charges are inconsistent with each other. I repeat again, that the only relief proposed for the country by the noble lord consists of a fixed duty of 8s. on corn, an increase of the assessed taxes, and an imposition of a legacy duty on real property. First of all, with regard to a fixed duty of 8s. on corn. But that tax has already been negatived by the House, and must at all times be a precarious source of revenue; for in case of a favourable harvest, no corn would be imported, and there would then be no revenue at all. I come now to consider the expediency of increasing the assessed taxes. What increase is it that you would propose? You have lately increased them 10 per cent. I much doubt whether a great deal might not be said in favour of a property-tax as against an increase in the assessed taxes. If it be objected to a property-tax, that it diminishes the comforts of the poor by reducing the fund for their employment, I think I can show that assessed taxes are liable to the same imputation; and when the noble lord proposes to resort to assessed taxes, as a means of supplying this deficiency in the revenue, I think I could show him that every addition he made to assessed taxes would be more prejudicial in its effect on the labouring and industrious classes than a property-tax. But observe, if you choose to supply your revenue by assessed taxes, how are you to exempt certain parties—professional men for instance? You charge against a property-tax that the income from professions is rated under it in the same proportion as that applied to the profits of manufacture, or the interest of capital. Increase the assessed taxes, and then parties would be liable to the same charge. You do not allow them to go

free of the house-tax, the window-tax, or any other assessed tax, which it may be asserted (as in the case of the professional man) to their respectability to be rated to. And let it not be forgotten, that the higher you raise the assessed taxes, the greater you make the temptation to quit this country. Here is a great proprietor, of £50,000 or £60,000 a year. Tax his house 20 per cent., and you cannot prevent his closing it, and you thus add an additional temptation to repair to a foreign capital, where he finds himself free from assessed taxes. By the measure I propose, I reach him by means of an Income-tax. I touch his landed property through the intervention of his tenantry; and if he have no tenants, I affect him through the funds. He may go abroad, but he is subjected to the charges he ought to bear in meeting the difficulties of the country. But tax his windows, or his house, and he will dismiss his establishment, and reduce the demand for productive labour, by going to Milan, Rome, or Paris. The noble lord will not touch him there; but I shall. The noble lord, however, will visit clergymen and widows, and all those who have not the means of travelling, with his impost. And just in proportion as he creates encouragement to go abroad by an exemption from the tax, does he press more severely on those who remain at home, and cannot relieve themselves from contributing to the necessities of the state. But the noble lord would resort to his old nostrum of the timber duties, to supply the deficiency in the revenue. What does the hon. member for Coventry, who is as free from the mere trammels of party as any man in this House—what does the hon. member for Coventry state upon that subject? He has said distinctly that he approves of my proposal with respect to timber more than of the proposal of the noble lord. Now, if there be any article which enters more into the common consumption of the people than another, and which ought if possible to be exempted from taxation, it is this very article of timber. The proofs which I have had laid before me of the effects which the cheapening of timber would produce in the encouragement of local improvements, and in the promotion of the building of bridges and of piers, are so convincing and overwhelming, that it is almost impossible to resist the necessity of reducing the duties on timber. What increased sources of employment will not the measure open to the manufacturing classes? We hear of the distress of the shipping interest—of the immense importance, commercially and politically, of reviving the prosperity of that interest. How can we do so more effectually than by facilitating the purchase of timber? If we enable the ship-builder here, to compete with the ship-builder abroad, to how many men shall we not give employment? What vast sources of maritime strength may we not expect to accrue to us. Has not the high price of timber been a great impediment to the construction of houses? Has it not affected the very mode of building? What has been its influence upon the construction of cottages? Now, I desire to know from the noble lord opposite, and I beg to ask hon. members generally, whether any one who has looked at the reports laid before this House, can for a moment doubt, that the alteration in the timber duties can prove otherwise than a great boon to the people of Ireland? I take the cottages of the poor in Ireland. I ask any hon. member who has read the evidence laid before the House on that subject to say, if that evidence does not contain the strongest possible proof that no want is more severely felt in Ireland than the want of timber? The high duty also operates most injuriously upon British fishermen. Owing to the better construction of their boats, the foreign fishermen enjoy a monopoly of fishing in deep seas. Reduce the price of timber, and you at once enable our fishermen to compete with them, and thus give the means of employment to a large number of men. An hon. member opposite says, we ought to make Canada an integral part of the empire; and immediately after, he proposed that we should put an additional duty on timber, the produce of that colony. I purpose that Canadian timber shall enter into fair competition with the timber of this country, whilst I retain a duty of 30s. upon Baltic timber, which I hope will be sufficiently protective of that of Canada. By adopting my proposition with respect to timber, we shall increase the demand for productive industry, whilst, at the same time, we shall indirectly increase the revenue. I admit that the effect of my measure will be to cause an immediate loss of revenue, and that, on the contrary, an increase of revenue would probably result from the adoption of the noble lord's plan; but still I think that mine is superior to that of the noble lord. Now, with respect to sugar, the noble lord mistakes, if he supposes that, when

I referred to articles upon which a reduction of duty had not led to a corresponding increase of revenue, and that we could not hope to realise any immediate advantage from pursuing a similar course on the present occasion, I was referring to sugar. I never denied that the consequence of reducing the duty upon foreign sugar must be an increase of revenue. I said before, that that was not my objection to the proposition of the noble lord. If the proposition were made now to retain the existing duty upon British sugar, and to reduce the duty on foreign sugar to 36s., I would oppose it. If we must deal with sugar, I think the way in which we ought to deal with it is by making a considerable reduction of duty as well with respect to colonial produce as to foreign produce. Why have I dealt so liberally with respect to timber, but because I want the profit arising from the reduction of duty to be obtained by the consumer? It is infinitely better to deal on a large scale with great articles of consumption, and to make a great reduction of duty, in order that the consumer may obtain the advantage of it, than, as has been done in some cases, to reduce the duty, so that we lose the revenue, and put the profit in the pocket of the wholesale dealer. I never doubted that the noble lord might make a proposal with respect to sugar, which would have the effect of increasing the revenue. I must say, however, that we, last year, realised as much revenue from sugar, in consequence of the increased produce of our own colonies, as the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Baring) expected to obtain from the reduction of duty on foreign sugar. That, I admit, is not a decisive argument against the right hon. gentleman's proposition, because the principle of that was competition. The ground on which I opposed it was, that after the sacrifice we had made for the abolition of slavery, it would not redound to the honour or credit of the country to permit the introduction of sugar, the produce of slave colonies, without an effort, at least, to obtain some corresponding concession with respect to the slave-trade. I must say that, without closing my eyes in the slightest degree to the advantages to be derived from reducing the price of sugar, I do think, in the present state of the controversy with other countries in respect to the slave trade, and seeing the suspicion which is most unjustly thrown upon our motives, if we were now for mere pecuniary considerations, for the first time, to admit sugar the produce of Cuba and the Brazils, without having said one word with respect to any stipulation as to the slave-trade, we could not continue to maintain the character and influence which we now possess. This, I know, that men whose motives are entirely disinterested and free from any suspicion, such as Dr. Lushington, Sir Fowell Buxton, and some of those who have taken a most active part in respect to the abolition of the slave-trade, protested in the strongest terms against the admission of foreign sugar without any stipulation being made with respect to the slave-trade; and would not foreign nations refer to the testimony of those gentlemen, given against the interests of party, if we, for mere pecuniary consideration, should admit sugar the produce of slave-labour? What was the course pursued by the right hon. gentleman, the Lord Mayor of Dublin? He gave notice, that no foreign sugar should be allowed to be imported, except from colonies where slavery did not exist, and he abstained from bringing it forward only because it would have interfered with the provisions of the reciprocity treaties. Lord Brougham expressed similar opinions. It was said, that we took cotton and coffee, which were the produce of slave-labour; but there was this to be observed, that we had always taken those articles, whilst it was proposed that we should now for the first time begin to take sugar, the produce of slave-labour. These were the arguments which the right hon. gentleman opposite opposed in 1840 to the proposition of the hon. member for Wigan, for admitting slave-grown sugar. The noble lord alluded mysteriously to other taxes which might be resorted to, but he has taken care not to name them. I hope the labouring classes will observe that the noble lord threatens them with renewing some of the taxes which have been repealed during the last twenty years, for that was his object in referring to them. Looking, then, at the whole of the arrangements which I have made—looking at the taxes which I propose to lay on, and at those which I intend to remove—I do think myself warranted in saying that I have done all that could be accomplished for the working man; and most especially do I say this when I remember that I have exempted from the tax all incomes below £150 a-year. Supposing I were to attempt to raise revenue by increasing the duties on other articles of general use and

consumption—supposing that such was my object, what are the articles that could be selected? They are salt, leather, beer. I entertain no doubt but that I could, by taxing these articles, raise revenue, as well as I could by the proposal of an Income-tax. But, Sir, I require more than what is necessary to meet the deficiency under which we at present labour. Look at the state of the country with reference to foreign nations. Look at the war in India and China. We have to send six regiments to India, in order to maintain the honour and power of this country. This is attended with no little expense. Again, it should be borne in mind that as yet we have not come to the House for the supplemental estimates. I say the House ought to bear in mind these facts. It is not merely the deficiency with which we have to deal. The noble lord says, correctly, that the deficiency this year is £2,500,000., and that I propose, by the proceeds of the Income-tax and by the tariff, to obtain the sum of £4,381,000. That is my proposal. In doing this it is my intention to apply a great portion of the surplus to the remission of other taxes, which press heavily upon the country, as well as to the removal of the duties upon other articles which interfere with the productive industry of the nation. Sir, I consider, in proposing the adoption of an Income-tax, that I give a great boon to the country—to the productive industry of the country—to the manufacturing, commercial, and trading interests of this nation. That is the measure which I, on the part of the government, have thought it my duty to submit to parliament. I wish this to be known, not only in the House of Commons, but I wish it to go forth to the country. I think the country ought clearly to understand my proposition. I think they ought to see through the motives of those who have raised an opposition to it. Constant references have been made to the tariff which has been proposed. By that tariff the duty upon articles of sustenance is to be greatly reduced, and I also propose to admit what had previously been totally prohibited. I really hope that hon. friends of mine, connected with the manufacturing as well as with the agricultural interest, will suspend their judgment and opinion, until I have an opportunity of stating fully, fairly, and explicitly, my case. With reference to my intention, as regards the importation of live cattle, and the reduced duty on salted and dried meats, I do not despair of being able to show to the House clear, convincing, and satisfactory reasons for that portion of my tariff. I think I can demonstrate to the House that the price of meat has, for a number of years, been progressively increasing in this country. I mean to show, that although my duties are low, I cannot dispense with the Income-tax. I ask hon. members to pause. You will not act wisely if you give way to needless alarm. If you appeal to your own consciences on the subject, I feel perfectly satisfied that you will not abandon me in consequence of the Income-tax. I again ask you to suspend your judgments until I have an opportunity of bringing before you the whole of my case. I shall show you that, in other countries in Europe, the same scarcity of meat—the same inconvenience exists. I shall show you that in France the human population has increased far beyond the proportion of the growth of cattle; and that an extraordinary rise in the price of meat has consequently occurred there. I shall show, from documents which you cannot controvert, a gradual diminution in the consumption of meat, per head, throughout France. I shall show you the high price of cattle—that France is an importing country—and that, so far from that great and powerful empire, containing a population of 33,000,000—so far from that being a country that can inundate you with cattle, if there is a country from which cattle can be drawn, she will be your rival in the purchase of cattle. I will also show, that there is no ground of apprehension from Belgium or Holland, and that the grounds of apprehension are limited to a very narrow district in Europe. I will attempt also to show that the importation of foreign cattle, should it take place, would be a benefit to the agricultural, as well as to every other class in the country—that it will prove a great public advantage. Sir, I thought it right to state to the House the view which I take of the tariff, before I call on it to pass the vote for the Income-tax. I know the alarm that has been raised throughout the country—the efforts that have been made to disturb the public mind. No wonder that some alarm should have been excited when, amongst other devices, a printed proposition is circulated throughout the city of York, offering to supply meat from Hamburg at 3d. per pound, under the modified tariff, while, at the same moment, the price of meat in Hamburg itself is 5d. a pound. I know, too, that the minds of



the farmers have been agitated and disturbed, but I feel convinced that the apprehensions caused by the tariff are greatly overcharged. I cannot, and do not wish to deny, that great reductions are proposed by it; but though I do not now mean to enter further into detail upon the subject, I must again declare my conviction, that these reductions will be productive of great advantage to the agricultural, as well as the manufacturing and commercial classes. Well, Sir, I presume the noble lord will not quarrel with the relaxations proposed upon the import duties on coffee. These relaxations are to the amount of £100,000 yearly. That, however, will be allowed to be a fair proposition. [An hon. member: "Oh, oh!"] I try, Sir, to maintain my temper, amidst the various and conflicting attacks that are made—the embarrassing positions in which hon. gentlemen would wish to place me. But when I am met by these free-traders, who have been always clamouring for free-trade—who say, you ought to remove these prohibitions—who say, the manufacturing interest wants no protection—when, upon my proposing to make reductions, I am met by these persons with the argument, that I have selected certain unfortunate men as the victims of free-trade—this is a height of inconsistency which cannot well be surpassed. I am told by these free-traders that my reductions are needless—that I might have retained the respective duties of 10*d.* and 5*d.* And this is said after all we have heard about the great increase in the consumption. After the proofs that have been offered that the beverage is superseding all others, is it fair, after these statements, to tell me now that I may as well have retained the 10*d.* and 5*d.* duties, and prevented a loss to the revenue of £100,000? Again, with reference to the duties on timber, Mr. Deacon Hume, a gentleman whose opinions hon. gentlemen opposite profess to hold in so much reverence, said that timber was a raw material of surpassing importance to this country, and that our conduct with regard to it was like the folly of France in excluding iron. He said, you have coal, you have iron, and you want only wood, to possess all the elements for being one of the most prosperous countries on the face of the earth; and after this declaration of opinion, joined to the sentiments professed by so many gentlemen opposite, I am now to be told, that the relaxation of the timber duties is a needless sacrifice. So it is with respect to other articles included in the tariff. Allusions of this kind, of his hon. friend, had been made to them, not, I trust, merely in a factious spirit, but, perhaps, for the purpose of feigning the advantage in debating the Income-tax. But I believe that the good sense and discrimination of the people of this country will approve of the steps we have taken for the reduction of the duties on articles of subsistence and raw materials used in manufactures. These are the principles upon which I propose the present measure to the House, and on which it is my intention to submit the other measures which I have announced. The right hon. gentleman has said, that the measure is full of inequalities. But I would ask, what rigorous and comprehensive measure of taxation could be proposed, without being liable to the same charges? You must either resort to direct or indirect taxation. It is but a comparison of evils. I have never denied that a good deal of inconvenience, arising from the inquiries that must be instituted into the properties of men, is unavoidable from the imposition of an Income-tax. You may modify or mitigate the inconvenience, but you are bound to give the honest as much security as you can, that they do not have to pay more on account of the misconduct of the dishonest. A certain degree of inquisitorial scrutiny is, therefore, inseparable from an Income-tax. But the right hon. gentleman admits, that if a tax be levied on realised property it should be levied on income also. He will not consent to separate income. Those, however, who are in favour of a tax on realised property, cannot consistently vote for the noble lord's motion, and as his resolution is pointed as much against a tax upon realised property as against income, when the right hon. gentleman paints in such glowing and eloquent colours the position of the man labouring for subsistence by the exercise of his intellect, and on whom my proposition would call for a contribution proportioned to his income, I would ask the right hon. gentleman whether his sympathy would not be equally called forth on behalf of such a man by the imposition of a house or window tax? If, Sir, I possessed the eloquent imagination of the right hon. gentleman, I could point out in equally glowing terms the position of such a man, reduced to the melancholy alternative of avoiding the window-tax by closing up his windows, or of paying the law out of his scanty income—I might paint that man's misery when he saw his

children sitting round him, and no alternative but either to submit to the impost, or to injure the health of those he loved by closing the windows, shutting out the light of day, and the access of air. An eloquent man might draw these pictures of hardship with respect to any tax that could be imposed. But suppose I had submitted a plan of increased assessed taxes. It would be easy to prove to the noble lord, that the consequence of that increase might lead to severe privation. But if I offer to tax the incomes of men, such as the right hon. gentleman has described, and I call upon a man for a contribution which, if that income amount to £300 will be rather more than £8, and if, in lieu of that, I can present him with the reduction in the cost of living, that I shall compensate him for the full amount of his contribution I levy upon him—if I can give him cheaper food, if I can give him cheaper furniture, if I can give him articles of comparative luxury at a cheaper rate—which is the best proposal for relief—that I should ask for him to contribute £8, and that I should restore £10 by means of the diminished cost of living, or that I should enable the rich man to escape the impost by going abroad, and leave him who must necessarily remain at home subject to increased taxation? I do not deny the disadvantages of circumstances, but feeling the necessity, not only on account of our political necessities, which I will not exaggerate, but which I say are repairable, which I am certain the spirit and energy of this country will repair, but which, in order to repair speedily, will require great exertion from you, I call upon you to make that exertion, and the first step you take towards recovery—the first demonstration of your willingness, will be half the victory. If you are afraid to submit to sacrifices—if you paint in glowing colours the miserable condition of those who are to pay taxes—if you say it is better to go on on the present system, increasing the debt a little more, funding at 91—Why are the 3 per cents at 91? Who has made them 91? Public credit is high—the funds have risen—and say you, “You can have a loan easily now.” Oh, you miserable financiers! [Laughter and cheers.] I beg pardon, if, in the heat of debate, I have used a word that may give offence. But the funds are high, because you have shown a disposition not to resort to a system of loans in a time of peace. The funds have risen; but throw out my Income-tax, and ask for a fresh loan to cover your deficiency in the revenue, and you will see the force of the argument, that because the funds are at 91, you may wait a little longer and have a loan. No, that will depress the funds—that will prove a visionary scheme—and have the effect of sinking the funds. Funds are high while you maintain public credit, and all our disasters may be repaired, while there is a conviction, that you are willing to meet your difficulties. The noble lord taunted me and others who have expressed their intention to support me, because I said, in proposing these measures, not only that I proposed them with the cordial concurrence of my colleagues, and with their united responsibility, but I said, what was superfluous perhaps, that the decision of the House, on the great outline and principle of those measures, must necessarily decide the fate of the administration. And would it not be perfectly legitimate for men who differ on various points, and entertain doubts on several questions, seeing that the fate of great interests are involved, if they have confidence in a government, to demonstrate that confidence, by waiving their private opinions, and giving their support to that government whose principles they generally approve, but from whose individual measures they may differ in some respects, thinking it better in this crisis of affairs to trust them, than men who are at least unfortunate if not incompetent? That would be a justifiable, a wise, and a patriotic course of action. I said not too much when I said, that upon the fate of these measures the existence of the government depended. I believe it will be more for the interest of the monarchy—more for the strength and stability of the executive government—more for the credit and character of public men, that being defeated on great measures like these, we should commit to others the responsibility of conducting public affairs, than that we should take another course, that of going on year after year, dragging out a miserable existence—going on adopting the measures of our opponents. [Cheers from the Opposition.] Why, what measures have you proposed? Is this Income-tax yours? Have we meddled with the savings-banks? Have we proposed 5 per cent. upon the customs, and 10 per cent. upon the assessed taxes? Have we taken your Corn-law, or your sugar duties, or your timber duties? What does the taunt mean, then? What one particular measure have you to boast of? “But you have adopted our

principles," say you. When did you avow them? In the import duties? Surely, you take no credit for the import duties. The committee on the import duties was moved for by a gentleman who, as he is not now a member of the House, I may name, Mr. Hume; and when my noble friend, the member for Monmouth, asked what the object of the committee was, Mr. Hume explained, that it was to examine the effects of our Customs duties on imports, and the matter was passed over without a single word being said. Therefore, with respect to the principles of commercial policy, that the right hon. gentleman opposite should claim for themselves an exclusive monopoly in regard to free-trade, and taunt any member who dares to trespass on their manor with interfering with private property, is an assumption not at all justified by the facts. The proposals of the right hon. gentlemen were not brought forward in the meridian of their strength, but at least at a time when they had previously declared, that they had forfeited the confidence of this House. Now, as I agree in the opinions which were expressed with truth and power, that there may be various opinions on governments—that some may prefer a monarchical government and some an aristocratic government, but that, as it was truly said by Lord Melbourne, the worst government that can exist is that which has not strength to carry the great measures it proposes, but must live by the sufferance and forbearance of their opponents—cordially concurring in that opinion—I speak not of measures on which the House of Commons has a right to exercise its judgment, but the measures of men in a minority, and measures to carry which the government may think it essential to the public welfare—I feel myself justified in avowing, in reference to this particular question, that I do think it infinitely better for the public interest, that if this House is of opinion, that this measure is fraught with injustice, and that it ought not to be adopted—in that case, the House of Commons ought to repose its confidence in those who may have other measures to devise, which the House may think better suited to the exigencies of the times, and more consonant with the wishes of the country.

Debate adjourned.

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### INCOME-TAX—FIRST READING.

APRIL 18, 1842.

SIR ROBERT PEEL brought in the Income-tax bill. On the question being put that it be read a first time, Lord John Russell rose, and after reiterating his objections to the measure, moved as an amendment, that the bill be read a first time that day six months.

Sir Robert Peel: The noble lord had felt it incumbent upon him, in the discharge of his public duty, to take the very unusual course of resisting the first reading of the bill which he had brought in, in conformity with the resolution of the House. The chief part of the argument upon which the noble lord justified that unusual course of proceeding had been rather general—a sort of *argumentum ad hominem*, addressed personally to him; and in which the noble lord very fairly and candidly said, that having had some difficulty in discovering any valid and sufficiently satisfactory arguments against this bill, he had done him the honour of referring to a speech made by him in the year 1833, in which he found the arguments against a property-tax much stronger and much better put forward than any that he had yet heard. He confessed that, up to this period, he had thought that all the arguments advanced against the present proposed Income-tax were exceedingly weak and inefficient, and he did not think, when the circumstances under which the speech of 1833 was made were considered, that the noble lord had much strengthened his case by referring to what he then said. When an authority was quoted, it was always of great importance to refer to the period and to the circumstances under which that authority spoke. When he stated his strong objection to the imposition of an Income-tax in 1833—objections the force of which he felt at the present moment—what, at that time, was the financial position of the country? According to the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, there was then a net surplus of £1,500,000. Lord Althorp proposed a considerable remission of taxes upon articles of consumption,

amounting to a loss of revenue to the extent of about £1,000,000. The immediate loss to the revenue would be greater; but Lord Althorp calculated upon an increase of consumption which would make up a part of the deficiency, and that the total loss that he would sustain by the proposed reduction of taxes would still leave him a net surplus of about £516,000. That was the financial position of the country when he was called upon to deliver an opinion upon a projected tax upon property and income. Proposals were made to reduce the malt-tax, the house-tax, and the window-tax; and it was proposed to impose a property-tax by way of commutation for the house-tax and the window-tax. He decidedly objected to the imposition of a property-tax to effect that commutation. And even now, if the exchequer were in possession of a surplus of £500,000, and a proposition were made to reduce the malt-tax, the house-tax, and the window-tax, and to substitute in lieu of them a property-tax, he should offer to such a proposition the most strenuous opposition. He stated in 1833, that the house-tax and the window-tax partook of the nature of a property-tax, and that, having at that time a surplus of £500,000, he would not consent to the imposition of a direct property-tax—which he admitted to be open to many objections—with the view of relieving the country from a corresponding amount of charge upon houses and windows. What was the course which he took in 1833? Lord Althorp had lost the malt-tax. Lord Althorp asked, what course he thought ought to be pursued? He replied, "you may rely upon my support in the maintenance of the public credit; and if you come down to rescind the vote by which you have lost half the malt-tax, you may depend upon my support, in utter oblivion of all political considerations." He felt it to be his duty, under any circumstances, to maintain the public credit. He accordingly voted with Lord Althorp in rescinding the resolution of the House with respect to the malt-tax, and assisted him to the utmost of his power in upholding the public credit. And he begged to tell the noble lord, that it was mainly in consequence of the assurance so derived from him that Lord Althorp took the strong and decided measure of calling upon the House to rescind the vote it had previously given upon the subject of the malt-tax. What was the vote in reference to a property-tax that Lord Althorp at that time asked him to join him upon? It was proposed to take off part of the malt-tax, and part of the house-tax and window-tax. Lord Althorp met that proposition by another proposition. If the malt-tax, the house-tax, and the window-tax, were reduced, this was the way in which Lord Althorp proposed to make up the deficiency that would be occasioned in the revenue—all this, be it observed, was in a time of profound peace, and when the only ground for the proposition was one of financial emergency—this was the way in which Lord Althorp proposed to proceed:—"that the deficiency of the revenue which would be occasioned by a reduction of the tax on malt to 10s. a quarter, and by the repeal of the taxes on houses and windows, could only be supplied by the substitution of a general tax on property, and would occasion an extensive change in our whole financial system, which would at present be inexpedient."

Four days after Lord Althorp moved that amendment, he gave his vote in favour of Lord Althorp's proposition. When the noble lord referred to his opinion, with respect to Ireland, he had done him an injustice in quoting only a part instead of the whole of the opinion he had expressed. He was willing to admit that Ireland had no claim to an exemption from a property tax to which England and Scotland were subject; but his reason for exempting it now was, because there was no machinery in Ireland, by which such a tax could be collected. He proposed, however, to raise a corresponding sum, by an additional amount of taxation upon stamps and spirits. From those sources, the latter of which partook in some degree of the nature of a property-tax, he calculated upon obtaining an equivalent for a general property-tax in Ireland. When the noble lord charged him with having changed his opinions upon the subject of the property-tax, perhaps it would have been more fair if he had read the opinions which he expressed on the occasion. His words were these:—"He repeated, that the repeal of the half of the malt duty carried with it the repeal of the whole; and if the whole duty were repealed, and the house and window-tax were repealed, they would not be able to satisfy the public creditor; for it was a perfect delusion to suppose that the deficiency could be made up by increased consumption and by a reduction of expenditure. The only alternative, then, was a property-tax, to which he was decidedly opposed. He would not pledge himself beyond the present occasion;

but he would say that, in the present circumstances of the country, and at the present period of the session, either a property or an Income-tax would be a great calamity."

Those were the opinions which he expressed in 1833, admitting the inquisitorial character of the tax, and objecting to it, by way of commutation for other taxes, at a time when there was a clear surplus of £1,500,000 in the exchequer. But he asked whether the condition and circumstances of the country were not now so different as to justify him in taking a different view? The noble lord said, that the Income-tax was one that would excite discontent, and even disgust, in the country, as soon as it should come into actual operation. He admitted that it was not likely to be popular. But if he were to encounter so much of disgust, dissatisfaction, and unpopularity—if he were to be met by all the difficulties and obstructions which the noble lord had pointed out, and some of which, perhaps, he could himself foresee—what reason could he have in proposing a measure which would bring these consequences upon his head, except a firm belief that it was absolutely necessary to maintain the public credit, and a conviction that that credit could not in any way be so well maintained, or in a way so little oppressive to the country generally as by a property-tax. The noble lord said, that there was no such pressing necessity which warranted the imposition of a property-tax. Why, at the end of the present year the deficiency upon the last six years would not be less than £10,000,000; and upon the current year, ending April, 1843, the deficiency, exclusive of any expenditure that might be rendered necessary by the course of events in India, the deficiency would be at least £3,000,000. In addition to that, he calculated upon a loss of £1,200,000, from the reductions proposed upon the tariff, so that the gross deficit for which he should have to provide would not be less than £4,200,000. After all that had been stated in the course of the long and protracted debates upon the subject, he owned he could not see how he was to raise such an amount of revenue as would enable him to meet that large deficiency, without having recourse to such a tax upon income as that which he now proposed. Considering that they might confidently expect that the revival of trade and additional consumption would enable them to relieve the country from this tax, he thought they would much less disturb the industry of the country and the application of capital, by imposing a tax on property, than by trying to revive the taxes on such articles as salt, malt, and leather, which would have to be paid by all those whose condition they were so anxious to improve. He was firmly of opinion that he was consulting the interest and security of those who owned property, by the imposition of a property-tax, far more than he would have done had he subjected the great masses of the working classes to indirect taxation. Considering the manner in which property had accumulated, and considering the emergency in which the country was placed, he felt that he was perfectly justified in the proposal which he had made, to raise a deficit of £4,200,000, from the incomes of the landed aristocracy, and from the profits—for where no profits were made there would be no taxation—of those engaged in trades and professions, and he felt firmly convinced that his proposal was not only consistent with justice, but also with the interests of those by whom property was possessed. He believed, that among the consumers there was a feeling of satisfaction with his proposals, and a conviction that by the alterations proposed in the tariff they would be compensated for the inconvenience to which the tax would subject them. Notwithstanding the opinion which he formerly expressed, and which he still retained—that, with a surplus of £1,500,000, an Income-tax would be most unjust; and not denying its inequality or its inquisitorial character—still, from the result of the debates, and from the communications which he had received from various parts of the country, he was confirmed in the strong opinion which he had previously entertained when he opened the question to the House—that his proposal at the present emergency was both called for and just. He had not, in discussing the question, travelled beyond the limits which the noble lord had prescribed. He had confined himself to answering the speech of the noble lord, particularly that part of it having a personal reference. He thought it inconvenient to enter upon any discussion at the present moment in respect to the tariff. He thought he should be able to show, when the proper time came, that they might confidently rely on a reduction of price on the articles of subsistence, and that that reduction could be made consistently with the promotion

of the interests of the producer as well as of the consumer. He would, however, take the present opportunity of stating, that he should propose two modifications in the measure, for the purpose of remedying the objections made in the course of the debate. One was, in reference to the position of tenants in Scotland, which had been stated, and truly stated, to be differing from the position of tenants in England. The tenant in Scotland was not subject to any payment on account of tithes, nor was he subject to any of those payments which in England usually fell on the occupying tenant, but which, in Scotland, were borne by the landlord; and this was the reason why, in the act of 1806, a distinction was made—apparently, but not in reality—in favour of the occupying tenant in Scotland. He wished to place the tenant in Scotland on the same footing, or as nearly as it was possible on the same footing, in this respect, as the tenant in England. If the English tenant occupies land, tithe-free, he will be entitled to a deduction of one-eighth from the amount of assessment. That was clearly a deduction to which the tenant in Scotland was entitled. Again, supposing the landlord of the English tenant paid the usual charges, and this he almost universally did, the tenant in that case would be entitled to a remission. When he came to compute the amount of these deductions, he found that substantial justice would be done by charging the Scottish tenant on about one-third, instead of one-half, of his rent, making him liable for 2½d. instead of 3d. in the pound. He believed that this would place the tenantry in the two countries on nearly the same footing. He thought it better to do this than to call on the tenant in Scotland to make a return of the amount of his exemptions. In regard to the other modification which he had made, he was aware that one great objection to the tax was its inquisitorial nature. It was said, and said with great force, that it was unfair to subject the trader, or any other person liable to contribution under schedule D, to the inquisition established by the act of 1806; and it was further said, and no doubt justly enough, that the case of a trader or of a professional man differed from that of the landed proprietor or of the person possessing funded property, whose incomes were generally very well known. The arrangement which he proposed to make respecting the property in schedule D, was to leave the act of 1806, in reference to this point, as he found it—namely, to permit those who preferred it to go before a local commissioner, appointed by parties independent of the government; but in case any one objected to go before the local authority, and this might happen where the commissioner was a competitor in trade or a rival in manufactures, or where the disclosure of a person's income before a particular commissioner might be prejudicial or vexatious—if, then, any person objected going before the local commissioner, it was proposed to give the party the option of either doing so or of sending a return of his income to a sworn officer, the inspector of stamps. He proposed, also, that surcharges should be brought before that officer, with an appeal to a special commissioner, and that any person should have the option of disclosing his affairs to a special commissioner appointed by government, with the same power as the other commissioners. He had attempted to reconcile as far as possible these two objects, the impartial and just imposition of the tax, and the prevention of evasion and fraud; he sought to apply a remedy to those special evils, which were alleged to arise from an inquisitorial examination of the concerns of the trader or professional man. He hoped that he had removed at least some part of the objection by the remedy which he had proposed. His belief was, notwithstanding the predictions of the noble lord the member for London, respecting the disgust with which the tax would be hereafter viewed, and the unpopularity which would visit those who had proposed it,—notwithstanding this prediction, he must say, that there were indications throughout the country generally of a strong prevalent impression that the maintenance of public credit required the adoption by parliament of some vigorous and decisive course—his belief was, that among those parties who possessed property—and he spoke of property embarked in trade or manufactures, as well as property of a more permanent character—among such persons he believed there was a strong prevailing opinion, that if they were to raise £4,200,000 for the purpose of maintaining the public credit, it was perfectly consistent with justice, as well as policy, to impose the burden on property, rather than to curtail the comforts and enjoyments of those who constituted the great mass of the working classes. He would not enter any

further into the discussion of this subject. He did not know whether the noble lord opposite would feel it his duty to take the sense of the House on the present occasion or on the second reading. If, considering the peculiar circumstances of the discussion, the season of the year, and the immense importance to the trade and manufactures of the country, that the sense of parliament should be ascertained and the question settled—if the House, considering all these things, should think it advisable to make a temporary relaxation of those rules, which confined their discussions on this subject to two days in the week, he would willingly propose to devote more than two days to the consideration of the Income-tax and the tariff.

The House divided on the question, that the word "now" stand part of the question. Ayes, 285; Noes, 188; majority, 97. Bill read a first time; to be read a second time.

### INCOME-TAX.

APRIL 29, 1842.

On the motion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the House went into Committee on the Income-tax bill.

Upon schedule D being put, Mr. Roebuck moved the amendment of which he had given notice—that instead of the word "sevenpence," the words "threepence-halfpenny" be inserted in the clause.

SIR ROBERT PEEL: I was rather surprised to find that the right hon. gentleman who has just sat down (Mr. V. Smith) would vote in favour of the proposition of the hon. and learned member for Bath, because he says, that whenever you can do justice you must do it; but there is a clear distinction between the cases of trades and of professions, and there is a peculiar aggravation of the injustice which pervades this bill, in respect of professions, which does not apply to trades. The right hon. gentleman, therefore, should make a distinction between trades and professions, and should propose that they should be made subject to different rates of taxation. And it will be no answer, according to the view which he has taken, that there will be a difficulty in doing so; for there will be no greater difficulty than that with which the hon. and learned member for Bath has to contend; and it is clear that, according to his principles, he cannot support the motion of that hon. and learned member, but that he should rather strive to apply a rule to professions different from that which he would apply to trades. I think, however, without going any further into this point, that we should on this occasion confine ourselves to the discussion of the question, whether it would be just, according to the principles on which this House usually acts, and fitting, as regards the interests of the public, that a distinction should be made according to the source from which the tax is to be derived. And I will first observe, with regard to the right hon. gentleman the member for Taunton, that I concur with him both in the vote which he is about to give, and on the general grounds upon which that vote will rest. The right hon. gentleman assumes, for the sake of argument, that the House is right in imposing an Income-tax, and he says that if that be a just and an expedient course to take, there should be no exemption on account of any supposed difference with regard to the means of obtaining the income of the person taxed. I differ from the right hon. gentleman in this; and I retain the opinion which I originally expressed, that if you have to raise three and a half or four millions of money, under the present circumstances of the country, there is no manner in which it can be raised with less of embarrassment or inconvenience to the community than by imposing a tax upon income. I repeat that I retain the opinion which I have always expressed, and that all the discussions which I have heard upon the subject, have only confirmed my impression, that on the whole, there is no other course by which the same end could be attained, and less of injustice done. The hon. and learned member for Bath, in referring to this part of the subject, has alluded to the maxims laid down by Dr. Adam Smith, with regard to the principles of taxation. Those maxims are—"The subjects of every state ought to contribute towards the support of the government, as nearly as possible, according to their respective abilities; that is, in proportion to the revenue which

they respectively enjoy under the protection of the state. Secondly, the tax which each individual is bound to pay, ought to be certain and not arbitrary. Thirdly, every tax ought to be levied at the time, or in the manner, in which it is most likely to be convenient for the contributor to pay it. Fourthly, every tax ought to be so contrived as both to take out, and to keep out of the pockets of the people as little as possible, over and above what it brings into the public treasury of the state."

From these maxims a recent writer has drawn this conclusion, that there is not one of those maxims taken on the whole, or scarcely any part of any one of them taken distinctly, which a tax on income does not more fully confirm than any tax of any other description; and that writer refers to these propositions for the purpose of showing that the tax on incomes is more just to all classes of the community, and particularly to the great consuming classes, than those taxes which are derivable from any other source. And I must say, that if we had attempted to levy this amount of taxes, either on articles of consumption, by an increase of the window-tax, or of the assessed taxes, or by a house-tax, the particular class which would have been peculiarly subject to the additional burdens to be imposed, would have consisted of those persons who derive their incomes from professional employment; and I say again, that this Income-tax has this advantage over all other taxes, that the wealthy man cannot escape its operation by withdrawing himself from this country, for whether he remains here, or absents himself altogether from this country, so long as he derives his income from this country, he is still open to the operation of the tax. With regard to the particular exemption sought to be established by this motion, I agreed with the right hon. gentleman, the member for Taunton, and I cannot help thinking, that whatever course that right hon. gentleman may take—whether it be a popular or an unpopular course—it is, under all circumstances, only that line of conduct which is dictated to him by purely conscientious motives. I will now address myself to the arguments of the hon. and learned member for Bath. He spoke very warmly on the great responsibility which devolves on me, individually, on account of the decision to which I have come on this subject. I can assure the hon. and learned member, that—when I have arrived at a conclusion that a particular course is the just course for me to take—with regard to amount of responsibility which devolves on me, I am prepared to undertake it all, for I think that it is a responsibility which I ought to bear. Now the hon. and learned member agrees with me that the Income-tax, subject to those modifications which he has stated, is, on the whole, the most just impost which could be adopted. I make the proposition as it now stands before the House, and he does not propose to remedy any one of the evils alleged against the tax on account of its inquisitorial nature. [Mr. Roebuck: We have not come to that yet.] Speaking of the hon. and learned member's proposition, the inquisition into the incomes derived from trades and professions must equally take place, whether the amount to be levied be 3½*d.* or 7*d.* in the pound; and the inquisition so much complained of, would be only aggravated under this new proposition, because the same objectionable mode of ascertaining the income of a person must be put into operation for the purpose of levying a smaller sum than would be raised under my proposition. His motion, therefore, has not for any part of its object the application of a remedy for this alleged defect, but his proposal is simply this, that other incomes being subject to taxation to a certain amount, the income derived from trades and professions shall only pay one-half. I object to that proposition, because I think that an adherence to the plan brought forward by the government would work less injustice than would be produced by such a system being adopted. We proposed to levy a tax on the income of the country to enable us to supply the deficiency in the revenue, but at the same time we seek to make an abatement in the cost of articles of consumption, in the hope to benefit all classes, but more especially those classes of which the hon. and learned member is the advocate. The other night the hon. and learned member appeared to view the justice of my proposal in a different light, and he argued that if you could make any distinction whatever, it should be on account of the permanency of the tenure of property; for when I went on to show the difference in respect of real property, as to the permanency of tenure, he said, that in every case he would make a proportionate abatement. That is not his proposal now; I understand the justice of



what he said then. I can understand your saying that in respect of all income, from whatever source derived, we should look to the duration of the interest of the holder of it, and subject all persons to a proportionate tax. The hon. member says now, "I will leave the income arising from real property subject to the Income-tax, but I will take one particular species of income which shall be exempt from it." But what has the hon. member done? He has agreed to schedule A being passed; he has agreed that "for all lands, tenements, and hereditaments, or heritages, in Great Britain, there shall be charged yearly, in respect of the property thereof, for every 20s. of the value thereof, the sum of sevenpence." He has not proposed any distinction to be drawn according to the duration of such income; but he says, "I will take the case of the fee-simple of an estate being vested in a particular person, and I will compare the value of the income arising from such estate, with an income derived from the professional exertions of a man;" but I say the hon. member is not at liberty to do so. He has not proposed to say to the owners of an estate in fee-simple, "You can sell your estate for twice the value for which you would sell it if you possessed only a life-interest in it, and therefore a distinction shall be made in your case, and the person enjoying only a life-interest shall pay less tax than you; but the hon. member says, "No matter what your interest may be in landed property, all owners of such property shall be subject to an equal rate of taxation." The hon. and learned member, then, has subjected the owner of an estate in fee-simple, and he who has only a life-interest in an estate, in like manner, to an Income-tax of 7d. in the pound, without making any distinction as to the difference of the tenure of their respective properties—he has subjected the occupying tenant to the Income-tax, without any reference to the nature of his tenure—nay, he has taken the man who holds his property at the will of his landlord, who is subject to be turned out of possession by a six months' notice—whose income depends upon his landlord's will, and upon the vicissitudes of the season—who has no permanent holding of his property, and whose tenure is not half so good as that which the surgeon, or physician, or the lawyer, possesses, in respect of his income—he has said to the occupying tenant, "You shall pay according to an assumed rate of profit; your profits shall be assumed to be equal to one-half your rent;" but then, without reference to the uncertainty of that profit, or of the tenure, the hon. member has said to him, "You shall contribute to this tax at the rate of 8½d. in the pound"—he has said that the holder of a terminable annuity should pay 7d. in the pound—he has determined, without raising any question at all, that in the case of a man who has sunk £10,000 in the purchase of an annuity for life, he shall be subject to a tax of 7d. in the pound; and yet he now seeks to draw this distinction in favour of persons whose position I may say, without hesitation, is far more fortunate than that of many of those to whose taxation upon the full scale he has offered no objection. If the test of the hon. and learned gentleman is a good one, let him go into the market and ask what is the value of the various incomes to which I have alluded, and let him apply his test in reference to the answer which he will receive. Then, by a future schedule, I am about to subject the holders of office, without any exemption, to the payment of a tax of sevenpence in the pound. All clerks in public offices, all those holding office during pleasure, are to be required to pay a tax of 7d. in the pound on their incomes. If the uncertainty of the tenure of incomes were to prevail at all in the consideration of the question, I should think, from the experience of late years, that holders of high political offices were entitled to some favour. But it is proposed that all those who are in this position, who have devoted all their abilities to the public service in the various civil departments of the State, shall be called upon to contribute 7d. in the pound on their income, equally with the holders of property in fee-simple. I will take the case of all military officers receiving half-pay, or receiving full-pay and engaged in the performance of their duties: it is proposed to subject them to this payment of 7d. in the pound on the amount of the income which they may derive from their exertions in the public service; and then I say, if you do subject incomes of this kind, so different in their tenure from those arising from fixed property—if you do subject the clergyman of £300 a year, who holds property which is, no doubt, of a permanent character, namely, his tithes, and his living, but whose tenure of it is most precarious—if you do subject him who

receives an income, with important professional duties attached to it, to a tax of 7*d.* in the pound—reviewing all these cases, I contend that there is more of justice in subjecting the professional man and the person whose income is derived from trade to this tax, than if I continued all these classes subject to the Income-tax, but said that with respect to trades and professions there should be an exemption. [Viscount Howick: An exemption is not asked for.] No; but an abatement of one-half is asked for, resting on an entirely arbitrary rule. If you ask me what would be the public impression, if I gave way to the proposition of the hon. and learned member, I must say that I think, that if I subjected the widow, with a jointure only enduring for her life, the holder of a terminable annuity, the clergyman, the admiral, the general, and all those other classes to which I have referred, to an equal amount of duty with the holder of property in fee-simple,—but should now take the wealthy physician, the lawyer making a large professional income, and the great banker of London, and relieve them from their liability, my opinion is, that the public impression would be, that this House would be guilty of great injustice in sanctioning such a course to be adopted. If trade has been unproductive, we do not seek to tax it upon any assumption of profit. If, on the average of the last three years, the employment of capital in trade has been accompanied by no return, an exemption from payment will be the consequence. The levy is to be taken, in most cases, where the trade has continued for more than three years, upon the rate of profit derived from the income of the trader during the preceding three years. Allowances and deductions are made in these instances, where I must say, none are made with respect to the landed interests. In the cases of professional men deriving an income of from £2000 to £4000 per annum from their exertions, whether they be physicians or lawyers, I apprehend that they have as great an interest in the maintenance of the tranquillity of the public credit, as many of those classes who would be supposed, by their immediate connections with the country, to be more particularly desirous for the stability of our institutions. So, also, in case of persons engaged in trade, who are as deeply interested in the due support of the credit of the country, at least, as naval or military officers. Therefore it is that I contend that the hon. and learned member is not carrying out those great principles for which he contends, but which I admit to be incapable of execution; because, in order to effect such an object, you must have an inquisition ten times more rigorous than that which is proposed. As I have already said, I do not consider the proposal of the hon. and learned member a just one; if I am to have the Income-tax—and I will not now stop to consider whether it is a proper tax or not, because the principle has already been adopted by the House—it does appear to me, that it is both just and manifestly expedient that all descriptions of incomes should be subjected to it; whether it be a time of war or peace makes no difference whatever; there is no distinction in this case with regard to the period at which the tax is to be imposed. My right hon. friend, (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) said truly, that there was no clamour raised against the application of this tax to professional incomes during the war; and I say, there was none, because it was felt, that to raise such a question would have been to attempt to introduce an unjust distinction. If the distinction is unjust in the time of peace, it is clearly equally so in the time of war. If the income derivable from trade, on account of the fluctuations of trade, ought to contribute less to the State than the income derived from land, what reason is there why that rule should not hold in time of war, as well as in time of peace? If you admit this principle, you will establish a principle which you must admit in time of war, and you will admit that the taxation which existed in 1803 and 1806 was unjust. And whatever may be the emergency or necessities of the country in time of war, you have nothing to do but to tax landed property at 12 per cent., and professional incomes at 6 per cent.; and if that is not sufficient, you must tax landed property at 20 per cent. in time of war; and incomes derivable from professions at 8 or 10 per cent. Nay, I can show good reasons why such a distinction should be drawn in time of war rather than in time of peace. The tendency of war is to increase the value of landed property. That effect was certainly produced during the last war; and war also has a tendency to depress commercial enterprise, and to interfere with the profits of trade. If it be just to make this distinction, then, in time of peace, it is equally so in time of war. It is quite clear that, if the justice of the

principle now urged be admitted, upon some future occasion it will be said, "True, you want twenty millions, and you must raise it by an Income-tax; but if it be unjust to subject us to the burden, raise three-fourths on land and one-fourth on us." And, therefore, I think that the establishment of such a principle as that which is contended for by the hon. and learned member, is open to more objections than that which is based upon the maintenance of the nominal equality of taxation. The amount of duty now proposed by the hon. and learned member is  $3\frac{1}{4}d.$  in the pound, but he leaves the question open to the consideration, whether that contribution be just or not. He claims for his proposition that it will do "rough justice," but there may be parties in the time of war who will think it desirable to smooth down his injustice, by still further removing the liabilities to the imposition of which he consents. When I consider the whole of the circumstances of this case—that if I call on any particular interest to part with its protection—if I abolish the prohibitions on the introduction of the produce of foreign countries competing with England, it is in the belief that I am in the course of passing financial and commercial measures to benefit the trading classes of the community of England, whose decline must be accompanied with that of other classes, and that I still believe that the first effect of that commercial tariff will be to benefit those who, in the first instance, derive their property from trade. I believe there will be no persons who will derive more benefit from these measures than those who are necessarily resident in this country; and I hope, and trust, and believe, that they will, in the diminished cost of living—not merely in the articles of produce of this country, but from the general effect of the tariff in respect of the manufactured articles of other countries, derive advantages which will afford an ample compensation, even to members of professions and trades, for a great part of the reduction which I shall make in their incomes, in asking them to pay out of any of their incomes amounting to £300 per annum, as little as £8 in three years. And it is on these grounds that I must adhere to the proposal which I originally made, which I believe to be more in accordance with justice than the principle involved in the amendment of the hon. and learned member for Bath, and I am not to be deterred, from any fear of the responsibility, from a firm adherence to that which I believe to be most consonant with justice, and most for the public benefit.

The committee divided on the question that the blank be filled with "threepence halfpenny;" Ayes, 112; Noes, 258; majority, 146.

Schedule D agreed to. Schedule E was then put, and Sir C. Napier moved the insertion of the following words;—"And except the pay-officers under the rank of general and flag officers, whose incomes are derived solely from their services, and not receiving pensions, either for wounds or good service, and are not paid as Queen's aides-de-camp, which shall be exempted."

Sir Robert Peel: Sir, no person can have a higher respect for the army and navy than I have, nor can any one entertain a deeper sense of gratitude for the services which they have performed towards this country, nor have a stronger confidence that when called upon, upon future occasions, they will emulate the fame which they have already gained on all past occasions. No one can more deeply regret the necessity of the imposition of this tax; but, inasmuch as there is to be a tax of this description to be generally imposed upon all incomes above £150 a-year, I do not think it would be just to take a particular class and exempt them from the operation of it. I must say, that the gallant officer behind me (Captain Carnegie) has given the proposition a support worthy of his profession—and I cannot help thinking that the officers of the army and navy would not wish to be exempted from the operation of a tax which all other classes must suffer under. I think, then, that my gallant friend has correctly stated the feelings of the officers of his service upon this subject. The question is not now what the hon. and gallant officer the member for Brighton has stated, as to whether or not a sufficient emergency has arisen to warrant the imposition of this tax, the House being in committee now upon the subject, we must assume that that emergency has arisen, and that the imposition must be applied. Assuming that to be the fact, I do not think a particular class ought to be exempted from the operation of the Income-tax.

The committee divided on the question that the words be added: Ayes, 32; Noes, 195; majority, 163. Schedule agreed to. House resumed. Committee to sit again.

## INCOME-TAX COMMITTEE.

MAY 2, 1842.

House in committee on the Income-tax bill. On clause 4 being proposed, Mr. Hume stated that he objected to the clause as it stood, but he knew it would be needless to bring forward any amendment, for government had determined that the bill should pass, and he admitted that it was of the utmost importance to the commercial interests that it should do so with as little delay as possible.

SIR R. PEEL said, that he had heard with the greatest satisfaction the opinion of the hon. member for Montrose, in respect to the advantage of their being enabled, at as early a period as they could, consistently with their performance of their public duty, to apply themselves to the consideration of the tariff. He thought it right that measures of such importance should undergo the serious consideration of the House. In regard to those motions for adjournment, he had never complained that they offered any unfair obstacle to the progress of the present measure. At the same time, he must say, that during those discussions, he entertained the strongest opinion, formed on the representations made to him, that it was of the utmost importance, to settle, as soon as they could, the commercial state of the country. That uncertainty removed, he thought there was every prospect of increased trade, and a greater demand for labour. Since the hon. member had admitted that the House had marked its sense of the principle of the present measure, he trusted that hon. gentlemen opposite would agree with him in thinking, that as little delay as possible should take place, in regard to the details and machinery of the bill. In regard to the objection urged by the hon. member against the present clause, he thought it would be liable to great exception, if government had proposed to supersede the local authorities, and to appoint officers of their own. If the principle recommended by the hon. member for Montrose was a good one for the present tax, it would also be a good one for the assessed taxes. Now, the government proposed to take the land-tax commissioners as they found them. The bill contained two principles in regard to the collection of the tax. In the first place, the tax would be collected, and the scrutiny made, by local authorities, but inasmuch as it was said, that many parties would object to the scrutiny being made by local authorities, the bill gave them the power of going before the local authorities, if they thought fit to do so, but if they objected to this, they had the option of going before the special commissioners, appointed by government. There would, therefore, be a local and a government tribunal, and the party aggrieved could go before either of them. It was more consistent to leave the local tribunals in the hands of the local authorities, and those of the government in the hands of the government. If the hon. member for Montrose was of opinion that the land-tax commissioners should be abolished, that was a subject for general consideration, but not one to be effected under a temporary act. He very much doubted whether they could constitutionally abolish altogether, those privileges which the counties had of assessing themselves, and of collecting the tax by means of local authorities. He would, however, reserve his opinion on that point, but he could not acquiesce in the suggestion of the hon. member for Montrose, and he hoped he had said enough to convince him that it was not desirable.

In reply to Mr. Labouchere,—

SIR R. PEEL said, he was sure the right hon. gentleman opposite would not, on consideration, charge him with the intention to impose upon the House, any such duresse, as that to which he had referred. He should not even have alluded to the delay that had taken place, but that the hon. member for Montrose, had, under the influence of a sense of public duty, stated the necessity of discussing the proposed alterations in the tariff, with as little delay as possible. He said, at once, that he had heard that declaration of the hon. member with satisfaction, and admitted, that it was of the highest importance to the commercial interests of the country, that they should be enabled to take time for the full consideration of the tariff; and that, at as early a period as possible, consistent with their due consideration, the question should be settled. He did not by that imply that any hon. member had interposed, or wished to interpose, any unnecessary delay, and to relieve the mind of the hon. gentleman, he was prepared to declare that the interval that had elapsed since the

introduction of the tariff, had had this advantage: that it had enabled the government to hold intercourse with, and receive communications from, persons connected with commerce, who would be affected by the proposed alterations, and the information so obtained had been found most valuable in completing the tariff. There were three or four calculations which were not yet concluded; but he might say, that the measure was so far completed, that they should be prepared to enter into the discussion of it, as soon as the report of the committee upon the Income-tax should have passed.

Mr. B. Wood wished to know, whether the government had taken his proposition into consideration—that a party should be allowed to set off his losses under one schedule, against his gains under another?

Sir R. Peel said, the time for bringing up the clause of the hon. gentleman had not yet arrived. The proper occasion for bringing the subject under the consideration of the House would be after the bill had gone through committee. For his own part, he had only to say, that he adhered to his promise, and had given it his fullest consideration, and he was bound to say, that he had found such objections to the proposal of the hon. gentleman, that it would be exceedingly difficult for him to give to it his sanction. The government were of opinion, after maturely considering the matter, that the proposal would give opportunities for the commission of the most extensive frauds, and it was for the purpose of guarding against that inconvenience, that they had introduced the bill in its present shape.

A great number of clauses were agreed to. After rule 3, in schedule C, had been disposed of, Mr. Baring moved, as an addition, the insertion of words to the effect, that property in the funds, &c., belonging to foreigners, should be exempted from the tax.

Sir R. Peel was quite ready to take the advice of the hon. member, and consider maturely whether it would not be better for his own character, as well as for the character of the House and country, to exempt foreigners, not subjects of Great Britain, from the tax which was now proposed. He was quite ready to consider that question. Let the House consider what the amount was, which they expected to gain from this source. It was calculated that the sum would be between £10,000 and £20,000. Really, that sum was so trifling that if they should be induced to commit an act of the slightest injustice towards any body of men, it would hardly have been worth while to do so for so small an amount. The principal arguments which had been advanced by the two hon. members who had addressed the House in favour of the motion, had been based on the former practice of parliament, and the *dicta* of Mr. Fox. Now, what were the *dicta* of Mr. Fox? He (Mr. Fox) said, it would be inconsistent with the principles upon which parliamentary representation subsisted, to give to the Crown the property of foreigners, in addition to that derived from those whom we represent; and how could her Majesty thank her good and loyal subjects for their benevolence, when the grant would not be wholly from themselves, but partly from foreigners? Mr. Fox said, that we could not tax foreigners who were not subjects of Great Britain. What did the bill say on this subject? He would refer to schedule D. It says—"Upon the annual profits or gains, arising or accruing to any person residing in Great Britain, for any kind of property whatever, whether situated in Great Britain or elsewhere, upon any profession, trade, employment, or vocation, whether the same shall be respectively carried on in Great Britain or elsewhere, there shall be charged yearly, for every 20s. of the amount of such profits or gains, the sum of 7d."

He thought it would appear clear, from what he had just read to the House, that they had acted upon the constitutional doctrines of Mr. Fox. Foreigners were not exempt from this tax imposed on all mortgaged property. If they had property invested in railroad speculations, the profits were deducted from the expenses; but if they held property in the British funds, then it was said they ought to be exempted from the payment of any deduction, and to tax their property under these circumstances was declared to be a great and flagrant act of injustice. This was to be the only exception, it was only to be viewed as unjust when applied to money invested by foreigners in the English funds. On what account, he would ask, was it so unjust? Did the public records or acts of parliament make any distinction between British subjects and foreigners? There was no clause in any act of parliament to

exempt foreigners from any of the responsibilities, or privileges, which result from loans granted to the State. The British funds were as open to the foreigner as to the subjects of this country; they were, in fact, open to the whole world, and every individual, without any distinction of country, may derive all the protection which the British funds offered. It was well known that the English funds had lately been advancing, and although he had no doubt that several circumstances had contributed to that event, still it was a fact, that since the Income-tax had been proposed for the adoption of parliament, the funds had risen 4 per cent. Now, what was the fact with reference to the English funds? The foreigner had the advantage of relieving himself, if he thought proper, by removing his money from the British funds, under certainly very favourable circumstances. He had the option of doing so at this time, if he wished to escape the Income-tax. The foreigner saw a disposition on the part of government, to increase the value of funded property, not by having recourse to fresh loans, but by making a great sacrifice to meet the financial embarrassments of the State. It did appear unjust to him, that the foreigner should derive the sole advantage which resulted from this national sacrifice, and should not contribute his share towards the exigencies of the country. He thought the natural consequences of not incurring any additional public debt, would be considerably to enhance the public credit. The right hon. gentleman, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, (Mr. F. Baring) would exempt all foreigners, not being resident in any part of her Majesty's dominions, from this tax. He would like to know whether foreigners resident in any of our colonial possessions, in the Cape of Good Hope, or in Canada, were to be exempted? What constituted residence, according to the opinion of the right hon. member, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer? He said,—“The annuities, dividends, and shares, *bona fide* belonging to any person not being a subject of her Majesty, and not being resident in Great Britain, or elsewhere, within the dominions of her Majesty, during such time as the same shall continue the property of such person, and such person shall not be resident in Great Britain, or elsewhere, within the dominions of her Majesty, as aforesaid; provided that such annuities, dividends, or shares, shall have been *bona fide* the property of such person, on the 22nd of April, 1842, and shall be duly claimed and ascertained in the manner hereinafter mentioned.”

Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox exempted foreigners from the tax during the war, upon political and prudential reasons, and totally without relation to any abstract considerations of justice. He was quite aware that the sum to be derived from the taxation of stock held by foreigners would be very inconsiderable, but he also felt that there was no valid claim for exemption. A full consideration of justice to all had led him to impose a tax upon all. The foreigner had purchased into our funds, because of the security which it offered him—that property was now more valuable in consequence of the sacrifices which the people of England was about to make, and it would be very unfair that he should go wholly free from taxation while the Englishman bore it patiently.

The committee divided on the question that the words proposed by Mr. Baring be added:—Ayes, 40; Noes, 203; majority, 163. House resumed; committee to sit again.

## THE NATIONAL PETITION—THE CHARTER.

MAY 3, 1842.

In the debate arising upon the presentation of the National Petition, coupled with Mr. T. Duncombe's motion, “That the petitioners be heard by themselves or their counsel at the bar of the House”—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows:—Sir, I hope I should have been exposed to no misconception if I had remained silent, yet, from the course which this debate has taken, I am unwilling to expose myself to the hazard of a misconception, or to shrink from the duty of declaring boldly and decidedly my opinions on the subject of this petition. Until I heard the construction put upon its prayer by the hon. gentleman (Mr. T. Duncombe), I thought there had been two propositions to be

considered by the House,—not quite consistent or compatible it is true,—but still, on the face of the document there appeared to be two proposals. The one that I should admit the petitioners to be heard, in order that they might state their grievances by their counsel or agents, while the other appeared to be an imperative demand that I should immediately, and without consideration, pass into a law every demand that is contained in the charter. Sir, I do not want to take any advantage of the charter for the purpose of vindicating my vote. If the question of the charter be not before us, I am ready to give my vote against hearing the petitioners at the bar of the House of Commons in support of their allegations. I shall give this vote on various grounds. First, I am satisfied that I cannot be convinced of the policy of acceding to the prayer of this petition. I come to the conclusion to which the hon. member for Leicester has already come—the foregone conclusion, that those demands, if complied with, would be mischievous to the petitioners themselves; and having come to that conclusion, I think it more just and more respectful to tell them that I do not intend to accede to their petition, than to give them a delusive hearing, which I know can have no useful result. Why, Sir, what does the hon. member for Finsbury, the colleague of the hon. gentleman, tell me? That on the result of my decision with respect to the hearing of the petitioners will depend either awakened hope or fearful despondency. Well, I will not awaken hope by countenancing expectations which I know must end in disappointment. The hon. gentleman says he wishes to pledge me to nothing, he only wishes me to hear the grievances detailed. But he asks me to hear the allegations of the petitioners, and those allegations are neither more nor less than an impeachment of the whole constitution of this country, and the whole frame of society. The petition tells me that it is wrong to maintain an Established Church—it says that £9,000,000 of money are annually abstracted from the people for the purpose of maintaining the church. The petition tells me that the people of Ireland are entitled to the repeal of the union. The petition draws a most invidious comparison between the expenses of the Sovereign and those of a labourer. I say the petition is altogether an impeachment of the constitution of this country, and of the whole frame of society. And how am I to gratify the demands of the petitioners? Hear them at the bar! Why, if I hear them, let me hear them effectually. But is it an effectual hearing to permit four or five persons on their behalf to make speeches at the bar of the House? Are those speeches to be relied upon? Suppose the speeches at the bar failed of producing an effect, and a demand were then made for an inquiry, should I refuse it, or suspend the whole public business of the country, in order that the bulk of these allegations might be ascertained as to the policy of an Established Church, and a repeal of the union? Is not that the only effectual way in which the petitioners would have an opportunity of explaining their grievances? and is it for the advantage of the petitioners themselves that I should suspend the public business of the country for the purpose of inquiring into this subject? What is the petition? If I had a doubt, which I have not, upon this subject, strange as it should seem, the speech of the hon. and learned member for Bath would have convinced me that the greatest absurdity ever committed would be to enter into an inquiry with respect to the allegations in this petition—a petition which does not represent the sentiments of those who signed it—a petition that is utterly at variance with the judgment and good sense of the 3,000,000 of petitioners, but which has been imposed upon them by a cowardly demagogue whom the hon. gentleman knows, and whose personal knowledge of his character entitles him to speak of him with disrespect and contempt. I take the description of the petition from the hon. and learned gentleman himself, and could I admit the framer of this petition, a person so described by the hon. and learned gentleman—a man who has perverted to his own evil purposes the minds of the respectable, intelligent, industrious, honest, labouring classes of this country, to the bar of this House, for he no doubt will be the person selected to defend the allegations of this trashy petition which he has drawn up, without being a party to the continuance of that delusion under which they labour? It is into the allegations of the petition that the hon. member for Finsbury asked me to go; and the allegations of the petition have been described by the hon. and learned gentleman the member for Bath. When I refer to the prayer of the petition,

when I refer to the character of him who is said to be its author, when I refer to the certain consequences of raising expectations which I know I must disappoint, I must say I think I am acting more respectfully and more justly towards the petitioners in refusing at once to accede to their demands, than by giving them a delusive hearing at the bar and afterwards telling them they have made no impression whatever on my mind. The hon. and learned member for Bath has described the character of the people of England. He said, that in other countries of Europe the appeal was to force, while in this country the appeal was to law. He said, the labouring classes possessed the physical force, which if they were inclined to enforce it would overpower every opposition; but they were controlled by their good sense and by their willing obedience to the law, for which they entertained respect. The hon. and learned gentleman pointed to the decrepit constable going into the midst of a crowd and seizing a powerful man; the officer of the law was unresisted: and although his prisoner was a person of much superior strength, he evinced a willing submission to authority, and the people by whom he was surrounded offered no opposition; but what nerved the arms of the constable? why it was the tacit influence of the law, that stood behind him. And what had given that influence to the law? What, but the conviction that it is just? Do you believe that if the people of this country were in the condition described in this memorial, which declares that "This House has by unconstitutional means created an unbearable despotism on the one hand, and a degrading slavery on the other,"—if that was a just representation of the people and the constitution of England, would that law which backs the decrepit constable possess the authority and influence it now exercises? Do you think the people, of whom the hon. and learned member has given such a description, would have that respect for the law they now entertain, if they did not feel that that law which guarantees property, which secures liberty, is a law equally for the poor and the rich? What description was given of the people of England by the other hon. member for Finsbury? He said, "I have travelled through various parts of Europe; I have had opportunities of observing the condition of the labouring classes abroad, and comparing it with our home population, and I defy you to find a more intelligent, a more prudent, a more independent, or a more high-spirited race than the people of England."

I grant it; but I ask him what has formed their character? Is it to the bricks and stones of their houses that we must attribute their character? No, it is to the laws and institutions of a free country. The high-minded, independent character of which the hon. and learned gentleman spoke, has been formed under those laws and institutions of which this petition contains the impeachment. And if it were true that we lived in a state of despotism on the one hand, or degrading slavery on the other, the people of this country would never have that respect for authority, nor would they deserve the character which the hon. and learned gentleman has given them. I did not understand the right hon. member for Edinburgh to state, that the people of this country were of a sanguinary disposition; and that if we admitted them to power, spoliation of property would be the result, but that there would be great danger if they consented to the prayer of this petition, so prepared by a designing and cowardly demagogue—adopting the description of the hon. and learned gentleman; or, if this be a libel upon the petitioners, how can the hon. and learned gentleman maintain that those who have been parties to a petition so full of trash and delusion, might not in other instances fall victims to other designing demagogues, who may say to them, "Now you are possessed of power, now you have the means of exercising it, and you are a degraded and cowardly race if you do not enforce your own terms?" I do not believe they would at once yield to such delusions; but what security can the hon. and learned gentleman give, that having been deluded once, the petitioners would not be deluded again? I understood the right hon. member for Edinburgh to argue, that, if you make an alteration in your constitution upon principles like those laid down in this petition—which states that public faith ought not to be maintained, and that the public creditor should not be paid, because debts were incurred by parliament without due authority, for the support of wars which were unjust—which affirms that the possession of the land is a monopoly—that machinery is a monopoly—if you allow the petitioners to come to your bar, to advocate an alteration of the constitution on those principles, you will be exciting



hopes and expectations which you cannot realize without leading to confusion, and which you cannot disappoint without danger. I understood the right hon. gentleman to argue that anarchy and confusion must arise from that state of things, because there would be no security for property: and that, in fact, uncertainty and spoliation of property must necessarily arise. But I did not understand him to affirm of the people of England that they were of a sanguinary and barbarous disposition, and inclined to possess themselves of the property of others. On account, then, of the delusion which must arise from granting the prayer of the petition, I cannot accede to this motion. If I am told that the charter is involved—if I am now deciding the question of universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and vote by ballot, I am content to rest the issue upon that ground also. I believe that universal suffrage will be incompatible with the maintenance of the mixed monarchy under which we live—I believe that mixed monarchy is important in respect to the end which is to be achieved rather than in respect to the means by which it is gained—that end I understand, to be the promotion of the happiness of the people; but in a country circumstanced like this, I will not consent to substitute mere democracy for that mixed form of government under which we live, and which, imperfect as it may be, has secured for us during 150 years more of practical happiness and of true liberty than has been enjoyed in any other country that ever existed, not excepting the United States of America, not excepting any other country whatever. We may be suffering severe privation. I deeply regret it, I sympathise with the sufferers, I admire their fortitude, I respect their patience, but I will not consent to make these momentous changes in the constitution, with the certainty that I shall afford no relief to the present privation and suffering, with the certainty only that I shall incur the risk of destroying that constitution, which, I believe, if you will permit it to remain untouched, will secure to your descendants as it has secured to you and your ancestors, those blessings which you will never find in any rash or precipitate changes, however plausible in speculation they may appear to be.

The motion was negatived by a majority of 236.

### CUSTOMS ACTS.—THE TARIFF.

MAY 10, 1842.

SIR ROBERT PEEL, in introducing the above measure to the House, spoke to the following effect:—I was in hopes that I should have been enabled to make any statement I have to offer on the subject of the proposed commercial tariff, after the House had resolved itself into a committee on the Customs' Duties' Acts. It is quite clear that it will be for general convenience that my statement should precede any extended discussion of the subject; and as the noble lord and other hon. members have given notice of motions which I apprehend they intend to bring on before the House resolves itself into the committee, I have no option but to make my statement on the motion for reading the order of the day. At the same time it is not my wish to anticipate, in what I have to say, the debates which will probably take place upon the motions which individual members have inserted in the votes. It seems to me that it will be better, as far as I can do so consistently with my duty, to avoid entering into the consideration of particular points. I rejoice that we have now arrived at that period when we can enter, as I trust we shall, seriously and continuously upon the discussion of the tariff. I am aware that much public inconvenience has necessarily resulted from the delay that has unavoidably occurred. At whatever period this subject was introduced, it was absolutely necessary that there should be a considerable interval between the first proposition of the plan submitted by government, and the consideration of it by the House in its perfected form. At the same time, it will not be understood that I am complaining of delay, or that impediments have been thrown in the way of discussion; such a delay, I say, was inevitable from the nature of the question, and I am sure all who hear me will feel that it was the duty of government to avoid communications beforehand with parties personally interested. It would have been impossible in those communications to have avoided indicating something of the intentions of ministers, and thus private parties with

whom the communications had been held would have had an advantage over their competitors. We had, therefore, no alternative but to make our proposition, in the first instance, without the advantage of private information; and after it was made, parties had a fair right to be heard in respect of the contemplated important changes in our commercial system affecting their pecuniary interests. I trust, therefore, that there has been some compensation for the evil of delay necessarily belonging to a proposal of this nature, and that an opportunity has been afforded to those whose partial and individual interests are affected, maturely to consider the whole scope of the plan of her Majesty's government, and fairly to consider whether they will not find ample compensation for the loss they may sustain in their special occupations and private interests, in the general advantages which we may hope will arise out of the measure in contemplation. The House has before it, in the papers recently printed, the existing rates of duty on the import of foreign articles; it has also before it the amount collected under those existing rates; it has before it the original proposition submitted by her Majesty's government for the amendment of the commercial tariff of the empire; and lastly, it has before it the corrected proposal, and consequently an opportunity of comparing the one with the other. A judgment may thus be formed of the intended modifications, and a satisfactory conclusion may be arrived at as to the temper and spirit in which this great arrangement has been undertaken by her Majesty's servants. I think it will and must be evident to all who have compared our first proposal with our last, that no undue influences have been allowed to operate upon the minds of ministers. In the course of the discussions I was repeatedly assured that I should not be able to resist the influence of interested parties. I appeal to the first proposal of government and to the last, and I leave it to any impartial man to determine whether any changes have been introduced from unworthy and improper motives. I think it will be seen that, whether the parties were powerful or weak, if they had reason on their side in favour of a modification, that modification has been made. If powerful parties have suggested alterations without reason, it will be manifest that these alterations have been resisted; if weak and unprotected parties submitted their claims to a farther consideration of some portion of the original proposition, those parties, though weak and unprotected, have had a fair hearing, and if favour has been shown to any one it is to those who are weak and unprotected. I shall avoid as far as I can any reference to specific subjects to be separately brought under the consideration of the House, and I will state what is the general scope and purport of the commercial arrangement ministers have found themselves called upon to recommend. The general object of it is to simplify the existing law. It cannot be denied that the existing law is in many respects obscure and inconsistent, and that there are duties applicable to particular articles which are not reconcilable with principle. In the year 1787 Mr. Pitt consolidated the custom laws, and during the war, according to the degree of financial pressure, it was the practice occasionally to raise the customs' duties indiscriminately, with a view to revenue merely, and without considering the general results it might produce. I think that a great part of the anomalies and inconsistencies of our present tariff arises from that practice of an indiscriminate per centage being applied to various articles. In 1825 the customs' laws again came under the consideration of parliament, and, at the instance of Mr. Huskisson, many important changes were made. I may here remark that I wish to claim for the present government no undue share of credit for the proposal they have made, and I am bound to admit, that the last occasion on which the attention of the House was called to the subject was, when the committee on importations was appointed, in the year 1839. I do not say that if time had permitted the investigation might not have been more general and the result more complete, but I never did at the time, and I do not now, wish to depreciate the labours of that committee, or to deny that, in directing the attention of the public to the state of the tariff and importation duties, it established a claim to public gratitude. We have, therefore, applied ourselves to the imperfections in the tariff, in order to make it clear and intelligible, and as far as possible consistent, which, of itself, without reference to the amount of duty, is certainly a great public object. Speaking generally, we have also sought to remove all prohibitions—all absolute prohibitions—upon the import of foreign articles, and we have endeavoured to reduce duties which are so high as to

be prohibitory to such a scale as may admit of fair competition with domestic produce. In cases where that principle has been departed from, and prohibitory duties maintained, there we justify our departure from the rule by the special circumstances of the case; but the general rule has been to abolish prohibitions and to reduce prohibitory duties within the range of fair competition. With respect to raw materials which constitute the elements of our manufactures, our object, speaking generally, has been to reduce the duties on them to almost a nominal amount. In half-manufactured articles, which enter almost as much as the raw material into our domestic manufacture, we have reduced the duty to a moderate amount; and with regard to completely manufactured articles, our design has been to remove prohibition, and to reduce prohibitory duties, so that the manufactures of foreign countries may enter into a fair competition with our own. I still entertain that confident belief and expectation which I expressed on first intimating the intentions of government as to this tariff, that the general result of it will be, if adopted by the House, materially to diminish the charge of living in this country. If you say to me that we do not make sufficient reductions on particular commodities, which are material items in the expenditure of a private family, I am quite ready to admit it, as far as relates to individual articles; but I speak of the general effect of the tariff as proposed by her Majesty's government. If there be any truth in the principles either of trade or of arithmetic, I contend that its inevitable effect must be to give great advantages to all classes of consumers, and to make a considerable reduction in the present cost of living in this country, as compared with the cost of living in other countries. Taking the reductions on raw materials, on half-manufactured goods, and on manufactured goods, I am persuaded that the general result will be to make a considerable saving in the expenses of every family in the kingdom. I am quite aware that in this case, and in all such cases, it is impossible to make any great reduction on articles of general demand without affecting some special and particular trade. If I am told that we have dealt with too many articles, and that it would have been better to have taken only a few, my answer is, that there is this important advantage in dealing generally with the whole, that while we do in some quarters a partial injury, even there by our other reductions we make a corresponding compensation. I will now take the liberty of calling the attention of the House to some of the reductions proposed by her Majesty's government, and I will first advert to an article regarding which a great benefit will, I apprehend, be conferred upon agriculture, I allude to clover-seed. In the breeding and feeding of cattle, upon the improved system of agriculture, this is a most important item; and at the present duty of 20s. per cwt., such has been the demand for foreign clover-seed, that the amount of revenue produced by it in 1840 was no less than £141,000. Clover-seed is produced in some of the southern counties of England; but Scotland and some of our northern counties, are entirely dependent upon an extrinsic, if not a foreign supply. We propose to reduce the duty from 20s. to 10s. per cwt.—that is to say 100 per cent.; and I deeply regret that in making this reduction, some injury will be inflicted on those districts which have hitherto partially supplied the demand for clover-seed, and, indeed, in consequence of the high duty, have had a comparative monopoly. Our regret has been overruled by the necessity of the case, which is proved by the large importation of clover-seed in 1840, yielding £141,000, and by lowering the duty we propose to facilitate the importation of the article which will be a great advantage to the agriculturists of the north. The same reasoning will apply to grass-seeds; there may be in some parts of the kingdom a partial failure, and we may be able to procure a supply of a better article from the continent, and is it not to the manifest advantage of agriculture to promote the introduction of what is in some sort to be looked upon in the light of a raw material? We have, therefore, reduced the duty from 20s. per cwt. to 5s. per cwt. on grass-seeds. Take, again, onions. [Laughter]. Gentlemen may laugh; but let me tell them that the onion is a vegetable of the greatest importance to the vast body of the community; and if there should be a partial failure of this seed, it is most desirable that we should have the means of procuring it from the continent. The duty at present is 1s. 6d. per lb., an amount that encourages smuggling; and we recommend so considerable a reduction, that no doubt particular and interested parties have been greatly but unnecessarily alarmed. We propose to reduce the duty of 1s. 6d. per lb. to £1 per cwt. Then as to linseed, hempseed, and other oil seeds,

the change of duty will, of course, be of advantage to the crushers in this country, and enable them to compete with the foreigner. On these seeds, we reduce the duty from one shilling to one penny per quarter. The article is one of great importance; and the same character may be given to that to which I shall next advert: I mean foreign woods for furniture and for dyeing. The duty on foreign woods has ranged from 50 to 100 per cent. on the value of the article, and to the high amount is, I believe, to be attributed the recent great and injurious change in this kingdom in respect to cabinet-making. There is no country in the world where greater skill might be shown in the manufacture of furniture than in this. I cannot conceive a country possessing greater advantages of consummate skill and industry for supplying other countries; but what has been the consequence of the high duty? I know that there have been cases where mahogany has been imported into England, exported to the continent, and reimported into England in the shape of furniture on the payment of 20 per cent. duty. This may seem extraordinary, but the fact is so, and great advantages must be the result of lowering the duty on woods, and I do not in the least despair by the reduction of that duty, and the encouragement of competition among the skilful mechanics of this country, to bring about such improvements in the manufacture of furniture, that, instead of importing it as at present from France and Germany, we shall manufacture largely for export, and that by our own excellent mechanics, will outstrip all their foreign competitors. It is impossible to deny that of late years, whether from this cause alone or others, conjointly, the manufacture of furniture has been very much transferred from this country to France and Germany. So much, then, for the reduction of duty on wood for the purpose of ornamental furniture. By the by, I must not overlook another very important consideration with reference to this point—I mean the great advantage that will arise generally from the reduction of the duty on mahogany. It has of late years been discovered that this article, which hitherto has been exclusively devoted to furniture and ornamental purposes, might most advantageously be applied to purposes of ship-building. It has peculiar properties for resisting the dry rot, and if the price were reduced, it might most extensively be employed in some parts of ships. If I did not wish to avoid entering too much into detail, I could give examples of the effects that will be produced by the very material reductions proposed in the duties upon dyewoods; but that must be obvious to every man at all conversant with the trade of the country. There is no part of the tariff in which we make more important alterations than in that which relates to the reduction of the duty on ores. Whether I speak of iron, lead, or copper, in my opinion great advantage to the commerce and manufactures of this country will result from permitting the entry of these important articles at much more diminished rates of duty than at present. Let me take the case of copper. At present you cannot import and smelt foreign copper for internal use. You have greater advantages than any other country possesses with respect to coal—you have it at a cheaper rate; and you can apply that coal with great advantage to the smelting of foreign copper; but when it is smelted you cannot make use of it for the purpose of home manufacture, and you send it to France and Belgium to be rolled and manufactured. What is the consequence? Why, that those foreign countries can come into the markets of Europe, undersell you in copper smelted by your coal, in bolts for the fastening and copper for the sheathing of ships, and in a variety of other articles made of brass and copper, giving in many instances to the foreign manufacturer the advantage of £10 per ton in respect to copper smelted with your coal. In France and Belgium, I believe I state the fact, the price of smelted copper has been less by £10 per ton than in this country; and, as I said before, ships can be fastened and coppered on the continent at a much cheaper rate than in this country. As a decisive proof of the benefit to be derived from reducing the duty on manufactured copper, I may mention that the effect of the tariff has already been, in France and Belgium, to reduce the price of copper. In confirmation, I may refer to something that passed in this country last winter. A foreign power was desirous of entering into a contract for building several steam-ships, an application was made to parties in this country; the only objection to entering into the contract was the expense of copper fastening, and coppering the vessels, as well as of the copper boilers. A drawback on the amount of copper so to be employed was asked for, or that it should be imported duty free. Of course it was impossible to

concede this point, and it was stated that the contract must on this account be transferred to Rotterdam, or to some port of Belgium. I believe that that course was not taken, and that the acceptance and fulfilment of the contract is suspended until the decision of this House is known. There is every ground for thinking that the expected reduction in the price of copper will enable the parties in this contract, to execute the contract which otherwise must be transferred to some ports of the continent. From copper, I proceed to another important element of our manufactures—I mean oils and extracts. The domestic manufacture of this country has of late years been exposed to comparative disadvantage, in consequence of the price of oils, and of these no one is more valuable for the purpose than spermaceti oil. The present duty on spermaceti oil, train oil, and blubber, is £26 12s. per ton, and we propose to reduce the duty on train oil and blubber to £6 per ton, and upon spermaceti oil to £15 per ton. Thus we shall introduce the produce of the American fisheries into competition with the produce of our own fisheries, and prevent the price of oil in this country from reaching an extraordinary or extravagant amount. I hope, Sir, that in stating these details, I am not needlessly detaining the House; I want to establish by proof a position, of the truth of which I feel confident, that the general result of this tariff, if adopted by the House, will be to give new life, and activity to commerce, and to make a reduction to those charges which are now incurred by residence in this country. A very short time since the price of spermaceti oil in this country was from £60 to £70 per ton; but lately, I think in 1839 or 1840, it had risen to £95, and even to £111, per ton, and the effect was a great diminution of the consumption. The manufacturer who required that oil had no alternative but to consume olive or other vegetable oils, which did not answer his purpose so well, or to pay an extravagant price for spermaceti oil, I mean extravagant as compared to the price of that oil in the United States. There are no oils that can be substituted for it without disadvantage; vegetable oils have not the quality that is valuable in spermaceti oil, and yet we have had to carry on a formidable rivalry with the United States in some branches of manufacture with the disadvantage of having to pay 8s. or 8s. 6d. per gallon for oil which in America is sold for 3s. 9d. or 4s. per gallon—a difference of about 100 per cent. The reduction of duty we propose, under this head, while it will prove highly beneficial to manufactures, will not injuriously affect the capital employed in that important branch of our commerce, the sperm fishery. At the same time, it is important to take a security, that when sperm oil bears the price it has reached of late years, there should be some competition with the produce of other countries, which will reduce the price within moderate limits; and I do not believe it possible, when the price is reasonable in this country, that the Americans can inflict any injury on the British fisheries. From oils I pass to dye-stuffs and drugs, and this point is materially connected with the adulteration of medicines. In respect to dye-stuffs, without entering into minute details, I may state generally that the present amount of duty on those articles imported is so great as to lead to extensive smuggling. Very recently, a person who had smuggled a quantity of *nux vomica* compounded with the custom-house, and paid £1,000, to escape the rigour of the law. The effect of imposing an excessive duty has been in this, as in other cases, to lead to an illicit importation of the article. On the proposed change in the duty on timber, I believe, we are to have a separate discussion—a difference of opinion, I know, has been expressed on the subject of the proposed reduction of the duty on that article. For my part, I must say, that the more I consider the subject, the more firmly I hold the opinion that we are about to confer an important benefit on the consumer by the relinquishment of a certain amount—a very great amount, I admit, of revenue. Here I may be allowed to support my views by a *dictum* of Mr. Deacon Hume, who observed, “we have abundance of untaxed coal; abundance of untaxed iron; we only want abundance of untaxed wood, in order to be provided cheaply with the three great primary raw materials of employment and industry.”

That was the opinion, shortly expressed, of Mr. Deacon Hume, with respect to the great advantages of a reduction of duty on this article. I am afraid we cannot confer on the consumer the benefit of untaxed wood; I wish we could; but a total reduction of duty would be, I think, unwise. To admit an unlimited competition with the colonies in an article of so much importance to them, would I think be a course open to grave

objection. But the arrangement ultimately to import colonial timber free from duty, will keep in check any demand which might be made upon you, in the event of your being disposed to afford additional facilities for the importation of Baltic timber. I am aware that it is objected to my plan—that it will occasion a loss to the revenue of £600,000; but I do not know any article in which a reduction of price will be more useful. These are the principal raw materials or elements of manufactures in respect to which great reductions have been made; and I have stated some instances of the benefit which will, I think, arise to trade from the plan I have brought forward. I now approach the consideration of a reduction of duty on articles of foreign manufacture. We propose, speaking generally, to apply an amount of duty not exceeding 20 per cent. to such articles. There may be particular exceptions in cases where it has been shown that such a duty would be productive of injury, as I have before stated, the exceptions will be found to be in favour, where favour is shown at all, of the weak and unprotected interests. But the general rule is to establish a maximum duty of 20 per cent. At the present moment, the duties imposed on articles of foreign manufacture are as high in amount as they were during the war. There does not appear to have been any consistent and uniform consideration of the amount of those duties, and they have remained as they stood at the time when they were originally laid on. An objection has, I know, been taken by some gentlemen to the proposed reduction on articles of this class. It is said, that in making that reduction, and inviting the competition of foreign manufacturers, we have begun at the wrong end; that we ought to have dealt more largely with the Corn-laws—that we ought to have reduced to a greater degree the duties on articles of provisions; and that it is not just or wise to reduce the duties on foreign manufactures until such alterations have been made. It is said, that we are subjecting the manufacturers of this country to competition with labour which can be had on the continent on more favourable terms, and that we are bearing with undue harshness on that interest. Now, I wish to consider fairly the force of that objection. My answer to that is, in the first place, that we have reduced in a very material degree the price of the necessities of life. I will take the article of corn. The duty on the import of foreign wheat during the present week is, I think, 13s. per quarter. If the old law had been still in force, it would have been about 27s. [Interruption.] I shall be much obliged to hon. gentlemen if they will allow me to proceed without interruption in the statement which it is my duty to make. I say, there has been a very material reduction in the duties on the import of foreign corn, and that any man who will compare the duties payable this day on foreign oats, barley, and wheat, with those which would have been payable if the old law had been in force, must admit that there has been a very great diminution. I will now take the article of meat. What do we find to be the existing law in respect to the importation of meat? Why, with the exception of the duty on course salt beef, we find foreign fresh meat, or slightly salted, subject to absolute prohibition. It cannot be imported at all. We find also that fresh pork is equally subject to absolute prohibition. Now, the proposal which, after full consideration, her Majesty's government have come to is, that foreign meat shall be admitted into this country subject to a duty of 8s. per cwt. We find lard, an important article in the consumption by the poor, and also important to manufactures, now subject to a duty of 8s. per cwt. We propose to subject it to a duty of 2s. We find at present salted meat subject to a duty of 12s. the cwt., we propose to reduce it to 8s. the cwt. We find ham subject to a duty of £1 8s., we propose to reduce it to a 100 per cent.; that is to 14s. With respect to live animals—namely, oxen, cows, calves, and sheep, we find them now subject to a duty amounting to an absolute prohibition. We propose to admit them at rates of duty which are supposed by some to be considerably too low, but which, I trust, I shall be able to show are not so; for although the rates we have affixed will give a security against an extravagant increase of price of meat, at seasons when cattle are scarce, yet I feel confident, that by the removal of absolute prohibition, and by the substitution of a reasonable duty on live animals, as well as on fresh meat, the general interests of the country will be benefited, at the same time that the agricultural interest will have no reason whatever to complain. On the contrary, I feel confident that that great interest will, together with all the other interests of the country, derive benefit from the proposed alteration. I think I have now established the

proposition I laid down—namely, that with respect to the great leading articles of consumption, wheat, living animals and fresh meat, but particularly with respect to the two latter, her Majesty's government have proposed a measure that will effect a very important reduction in the price to the consumer. I will now take the article of fish. We find the importation of foreign salmon prohibited altogether. We propose a duty of 10*s.* per cwt. on foreign salmon, thus getting rid of the prohibition. Indeed, in every case, we have removed prohibition, and substituted a duty. I am aware that this proposal, with respect to salmon, has excited alarm among persons having important interests in the salmon fisheries. An invidious distinction has hitherto been made in respect to duties imposed on foreign fish: those fish which formed an article of consumption with the rich were admitted free of duty; but fish consumed by the poor have been prohibited, or only admitted at a high rate of duty. I will take a fish in which the poor are most interested—I mean herrings. A particularly important change has been proposed in respect to foreign herrings. [“Hear.”] I am almost doubtful, considering the importance which the hon. gentleman attaches to this part of the tariff, whether I am to construe that “hear” into a sign of approbation or of dissent, because I have certainly received the strongest remonstrances against this proposed reduction in respect to herrings, from that part of the country with which the hon. gentleman is connected. At present, all foreign-cured fish are prohibited. We propose, that foreign-cured fish shall be imported at a duty of 2*s.* the cwt. I will read a statement which has been made to me, in a letter from Scotland, with respect to herrings:—“Norway (the writer says) prepares about as many herrings as we do. They go to the Baltic, and the herrings cost them there about 7*s.* 6*d.* to 8*s.* per barrel: ours cost us from 18*s.* to 20*s.* per barrel. I presume, the Norwegian herrings may be landed in Ireland at 11*s.* to 12*s.* per barrel; while ours cannot be taken there for less than from 20*s.* to 22*s.* a barrel. I am a free trader in every other respect; but, with respect to herrings, I caution you against applying the general rule to them.”

I give you that as a sample of the general postscript which is attached to every communication her Majesty's government have received respecting every other article in the tariff. Now, I do not share in the apprehension entertained by this doubting correspondent; and I cannot help appealing to him that unless he can convince me that I shall be doing injury to the working classes in the north of Ireland, by enabling them to obtain herrings for 10*s.* a barrel, for which they are at present paying 20*s.*, I do not quite agree that I am absolutely wrong in the change I now propose. But my wish is to encourage the native fishermen, and enable them to compete with foreign fishermen. Why should not the inhabitants of the north of Scotland be enabled to cope with the Norwegian fishermen, in supplying Ireland with herrings? I say, reduce the duty on timber,—enable them to build boats in which they may navigate rougher waters, and traverse more distant seas; and then they will be quite capable of competing with foreign fishermen. Their bravery is as great, and their skill is as great. Let them have the means of obtaining as strong vessels as other fishermen, then new scenes will be open to them, and fresh stimulus will be given for exertion. But to effect this, you must reduce the cost price of the materials with which they work; but, above all, you must reduce the duty on timber. This will enable the British fishermen to compete successfully with the Norwegian in supplying the north of Ireland with fish. With respect then to the article of fish, I think, after what I have stated, it cannot be denied that her Majesty's government have made some important alterations. Now I come to vegetables, and to those which chiefly come into the consumption of the working classes. I find the duty on onions is now 3*s.* per bushel; we propose to reduce it to 6*d.* We find potatoes subject to a duty of 2*s.* per cwt., amounting almost to a prohibition. During the last winter, I received from the north of England and from Scotland many representations upon the subject of the supply of this article. Great alarm was felt respecting it during the prevalence of the wet weather. The price of potatoes appeared to be very low and reasonable, but it was said that the cause of that reduced price was the apprehensions that were felt that the potatoes would not keep, and they were therefore forced into the market. Considerable apprehensions were at that time entertained in Lancashire, and throughout the north of England and Scotland, in respect to the supply of the potatoes failing, and urgent representations were made to

the government upon the subject, some parties even suggesting that an order in council should be issued to permit the importation of sound foreign potatoes, to prevent the possibility of a deficient supply. I believe that those apprehensions were not altogether well founded, but, considering the importance of the article, I think a duty of 2s. a cwt. amounts to a prohibition. It is at all events, considerably too high, and a very material reduction ought to be made. I now pass from vegetables to the article of rice. Rice is an article which may be made a most material element in the subsistence of the people of this country. It is a most wholesome and useful article of food. The duty at present on foreign rice is £1 per quarter; we propose to reduce it to 7s. per quarter. I now come to a vegetable, in respect to which some notice has been taken in this House, and questions have been put upon it—I allude to hops. It appears in the printed tariff that no alteration in the duty is to be proposed. I stated on a former occasion that the consideration of this question was encompassed with many difficulties, on account, first, of the mode in which the duty was assessed, and the peculiar nature of the cultivation of the plant; and next, on account of the time when the arrangement for making alteration occurred. I wished to have an opportunity of communicating further with the parties who possessed the requisite local knowledge with respect to these points; and I, therefore, was anxious to suspend legislation upon this important article until I had the opportunity of having a full communication with them. That full communication has taken place, and her Majesty's government have formed their decision with respect to the course it was fitting for them to pursue. Considering the great vicissitudes of the seasons, particularly in their application to the production of this article—considering the great variations in the amount of the supply, and the high price it bears, as compared to the price of other productions—considering also the great importance of this article as entering into that which constitutes the beverage of the people—I mean beer and ale—considering all these things, I do think that the present great duty upon hops is extravagantly high. And although I should be most unwilling in this, as in any other interest, rudely to derange the existing application of capital, or bring about distress which would react upon other parts of the community, still her Majesty's government, after considering the peculiar nature of this article, and the alterations in its price, think that some security ought to be taken against those exorbitant prices which have obtained in some years by reason of the high prohibitory duty now imposed. The present duty on hops is £8 11s. per cwt. After having given the subject full consideration, we are of opinion, contrary, I fear, to the impressions of many, and contrary, certainly, to the remonstrances which her Majesty's government have received on the subject—but still, acting upon one uniform principle with respect to this tariff—we are of opinion that we ought to propose to parliament a considerable reduction of the present duty upon this important article. We therefore propose to reduce the duty of £8 11s. now levied, to £4 10s. per cwt. The effect of this alteration will be, not to injure or check the cultivation of hops, but to afford a security against the extravagant price which that article sometimes reaches in this country when the supply is deficient. Having enumerated these various articles on which alterations are proposed to be made, I maintain that it cannot be justly alleged that her Majesty's government have not made very material reductions, with respect to the price of articles which constitute the subsistence of the people of this country. Take the whole tariff, and not any one individual article, like the Corn-laws, and then can you deny that a material reduction has been made in the cost of sustenance, and that we are justified on that account in calling on the manufacturer to submit to a reduction of those duties which are supposed to constitute his protection? Now, in my opinion, there are very material errors in the general opinion with respect to the comparative cost of living in this country and foreign countries; and you will find, if you institute a comparison, particularly with respect to the inhabitants of large towns on the continent, that the cost of living of skilled manufacturers in those towns is very nearly as great as in this country. I will take the case of Brussels as an instance. A letter has been addressed to her Majesty's government, by a most intelligent and respected individual, and who is at the present moment the representative of her Majesty at the court of Brussels. That gentleman was not invited to express any opinion on



the subject, but, no doubt considering the great interest that is now taken in this country respecting these matters, he was induced to make some observations upon the subject. He says :—

“BRUSSELS, May 3, 1842.

“My Lord,—In the attempt so frequently made to establish a comparison between conditions essentially dissimilar, that, namely, of the working man in England and of a man of the same class on the continent, it very commonly happens that no allowance is made for the municipal or ‘octroi’ duties, which in the greater number of cases press heavily upon the latter. The paper which I have the honour of enclosing will show your lordship what the town dues amount to at Brussels upon some of the great articles of consumption, and will prove, at the same time, that these heavy charges have all but doubled during the ten years intervening between 1830 and 1840. Upon cattle the duties leviable on entering the town are in some cases quite as high or higher than those paid upon crossing the frontier. Thus a beast imported from Holland would be subject to a duty of 20*f.* on arriving at Belgium, and to a fresh duty of 24*f.* on passing the gates of Brussels.

“To the Right Hon. Earl of Aberdeen, K.T., &c.”

This is the communication furnished by a gentleman well qualified to speak upon the subject; and, therefore, in instituting a comparison between the price of articles in England and upon the continent, you must be guided in your conclusions not only by the customs’ duties, but also by the municipal duties of the several towns. But supposing that the answer which I have given upon the question of reduced prices of the articles of consumption should not be entirely satisfactory, yet there is another and an exclusive ground on which, independently of that question, I vindicate a reduction of the duties on articles of foreign manufacture. I say that these high duties are a mere delusion; that they do not constitute a protection to the British manufacturer, and that in looking at those duties for protection he rests entirely upon a fragile and faithless support. The check to their operation is the smuggler. It is a mere delusion to tell the home manufacturer that you levy a duty of 35 and 40 per cent. upon the importation of foreign manufactured articles, if he is robbed of that apparent protection by the importation of the same articles in an illicit way, consequently I think I could conclusively show that there is no reduction proposed with respect to foreign manufactures, which I cannot vindicate on this single and exclusive ground, that the duty remains at last as high as you can possibly levy it without calling in the interference of the smuggler. In order to remove all uneasy feeling from the mind of the British manufacturer, with the permission of the House I will read an important and *bonâ fide* letter, written by a very extensive smuggler. I will read it because I wish to give the House a conclusive proof of the delusiveness of maintaining high protecting duties upon foreign manufactures. This letter is, of course, not addressed to me, but I can guarantee it to be a *bonâ fide* letter, addressed by a man of large means and large capital, in a regular way of business as a smuggler, who, I believe, has daily intercourse with persons in this great city:—It is dated at the end of December, 1841, and after offering his services in supplying goods to certain persons, he adds,—

“I am also able to forward to you, every week, blondes and laces (I mean articles manufactured at Lille, Arras, Caen, Chantilly, &c.) at a very low premium, by the indirect channel. The goods would be delivered in London the same week of the reception here, by a sure and discreet individual. My means are always free of losses and damages, or I would not use them. Here follow the prices at which I might at present undertake the passage :—

|  | Per Cent. |
|--|-----------|
| Blondes, by pieces, according to value . . . . . | 9         |
| Blonde veils, according to value . . . . .       | 8 or 8½   |
| Laces (Lille ditto) . . . . .                    | 8 or 8½   |
| Silk gloves . . . . .                            | 11 to 12  |
| Kid gloves . . . . .                             | 12 to 13  |

And generally all silk goods, as gros de Naples, satins, gros des Indes, gros de

Paris, jewellery, &c., for which articles prices would be to be determined, but certainly a great deal under your custom-house duties."

Can there be, I ask, a more irresistible, a more tangible, or a more positive proof that you are not conferring a benefit upon the manufacturer by imposing a duty on articles of foreign manufacture so high as to afford a premium to the smuggler, who sets systematically your laws at defiance? Is it not clear that it is a positive advantage to the domestic manufacturer that he should know the extent of foreign competition he has to meet? Is it not to his interest that he should be fully and openly aware of it, and not be subject to an illicit, unseen competition, against which he can adopt no protection? There are no parties with whom I have had more intercourse, or whose case has called for more serious attention on my part, and on the part of my colleagues, than the case of a class of persons unsupported by any great interest, but which has been brought under our notice in a way which quite entitled them to consideration—I mean those parties who are concerned in the manufacture of straw plat. They are mostly women and children; and live in certain confined districts of the country. The present duty on straw plat is 17s. a cwt. We propose a reduction of the duty to 5s., but we have been induced, in consequence of their representation, to increase the duty upon the import of the foreign manufactured article to 7s. 6d. a cwt., in the hope that these parties will be enabled still, by the exercise of their ingenuity and skill, to compete with the foreign manufacturer. But I wish to convince them of the delusiveness of the security which they ask for. The present duty on the raw material, that is, foreign straw, not platted, is one penny per cwt. The duty on the same article, if platted before it is imported, is 17s. per cwt. Now this platted straw is so light an article that it affords great facilities for smuggling it into this country. I will give the House a proof of this. This small bundle which I hold in my hand is straw (the right hon. baronet exhibited it), the raw material which is used for the purpose of manufacturing the plat, and is subject only to a duty of 1d. the cwt. on its introduction into this country. The foreign platted straw, as I have already said, is subject to a duty of 17s. 6d. per cwt. But this is apparently a bundle of the unplatted straw. Now, observe (said the right hon. baronet, and he then began very deliberately to remove from one end of the small roll of straw, such as may be seen in the straw-bonnet shops of this metropolis, short pieces of the same material, and having done so, he drew forth a parcel of foreign manufactured platted straw), that it is upon this (continued the right hon. baronet) that a duty of 17s. 6d. per cwt. is imposed in order to give protection to the home manufacturer! Now, this is important, in order to show how delusive is the protection which this duty really affords against the importation of the manufactured article. This is a *bonâ fide* illustration of the delusiveness of these high protecting duties, and a conclusive proof how little benefit is derived to our domestic manufactures from imposts which can be so easily evaded. Now, these are the general grounds upon which I vindicate the reduction of duties upon foreign manufactures. I do so upon a double ground; first, by showing that we have made such a reduction in the cost of the means of subsistence as to justify us in reducing those duties; and, secondly, by showing, that the existing rate of duty is so high, that it affords no protection whatever. I dare say, by stating the amount of the reduction which I propose in some of the articles of foreign produce, hoping thereby to reduce the rate of living in this country, I have caused some alarm on the part of the producers of similar commodities in England. I speak chiefly now of those who are concerned in the production of cattle, and in the supply of meat. I wish to address myself more particularly to that class, for I never felt more confidence than I do now, that I shall be enabled to show, that the removal of prohibition in the case of cattle, and the reduction of duty on the importation of foreign meat, are not only perfectly justifiable, but demanded by a true consideration not only of the general interests of the country, but of the agricultural interest itself. It is quite an error to suppose that any class derives advantage by a high rate of living in this country. In the first place, there is no man, whatever article he may produce, but must derive a great advantage from a general reduction of prices. The particular article which he himself consumes may abide at the same price, and not fall under the general rule of reduction, and in respect to that particular article, he may be exposed to some suffering and loss; but he must in regard to the general articles of consumption, share in the benefit of the

reduction which the prices of those articles undergo. I will take, as an illustration of my argument, the case of the poor-rates. Within the last four years the cost of the articles of subsistence has been high. It is said, and I believe justly said, that the poor-rates fall with peculiar severity upon the landed interest. The profits of tradesmen in the towns which were originally contemplated to be subject to that impost, have of late years been free from it, by the effect of a temporary law, and those rates now fall with peculiar severity upon the owners and occupiers of land. Let us see how the cost of the articles of subsistence affects those rates. It appears, that the "amount of moneys levied under the denomination of poor's-rate in England and Wales, in 1837, was £5,294,000; 1838, £5,186,000; 1839, £5,613,000; 1840, £6,014,000." This shows that the increase of the amount of money levied on account of poor's-rate is in proportion to the increase of the price of provisions. I am quite aware that in some cases these prices have lately been reduced. I know that there has been a general apprehension, and, indeed, a general panic, on the subject of the importation of live cattle. It has been constantly represented to me that the panic existed, that it was in vain to argue against it, whether well or ill-founded—and to so prevailing a feeling, great deference ought to be shown. I venture to differ from that statement; I do not think it a part of the duty of any government to defer to a panic which they consider unfounded; much less do I consider it consistent on the part of the real friend of the agricultural interest of this country to show a deference to unjustifiable apprehensions. To defer to sound argument—to defer to justifiable apprehensions—is the duty of every government; but to concede to a panic which you believe to be ill-founded, would be inconsistent with a wise and statesmanlike course, and would be inviting persons who were the subjects of those unfounded fears to rest their hopes upon high prohibitory duties, which would indeed be resting upon an unstable foundation. But no steps which I could take could guard against the panic which has existed. I admit it has existed. But let me observe that some portion of the reduction which has taken place in the price of cattle must not be attributed to the panic. There must be, at this time of the year, a reduction of price. It is inevitable, because there is a large supply of, and a reduction in the price of fodder. The whole extent of the reduction, therefore, must not be connected with the panic. But if persons will insert advertisements in newspapers, offering to supply the best meat from Hamburg and other places at 3d. per lb., and if parties will not inquire into the truth of it, but will take it for granted, and will sell their cattle in consequence, I cannot help it. A little inquiry would have shown at once how impossible the thing must be. A house with a fine German name, at Hamburg, is represented as offering to supply meat at 3d. per lb. Now, the slightest exertion would have discovered that no such house exists at all. If it does exist there, all I can say is, that the house which so offers to supply the manufacturing districts of the country with meat at 3d. a lb., is at present paying 6d. a lb. for it in Hamburg. My belief is, that interested parties, pretending to sympathise with the poor manufacturing classes, have inserted these advertisements, having a knowledge of the prevailing panic, for the purpose of taking advantage of those who, by their fears, are bringing their cattle into the market. But I trust that the delay which has taken place in bringing forward this measure has tended to produce a calmer and soberer judgment on the subject, and that this cattle-panic is of itself fast dying away. I have read an account of some recent occurrences, particularly in the northern parts of the country, which leads me to think that those who expected to purchase cattle at a very reduced price will be disappointed: and that sounder notions are entertained, with respect to the price of cattle. But, in arguing this question of cattle, I am not about to say there will be no reduction of price—I am not going to contend, that by admitting foreign cattle, and foreign meat, that at no period there will be any competition or reduction of price. But what I maintain, and what I am about to establish, is this, that the price of cattle and meat in this country has been unduly high—extravagantly high—and that if we can effect a reduction of price, we ought to effect that reduction. I shall show you, that your apprehensions are unfounded—that there will be no such material fall (I cannot effect that) in the price of cattle, as will affect the price of land, or in any way disturb the relations which now exist between landlord and tenant. But I am able to establish, by conclusive proof, that you ought to seek security, if you can, against the extra-

gant price of meat in this country, and which may arise from a defective supply, caused by applications of capital to other agricultural productions, and still more by the disorders which have prevailed among the cattle, and which have much diminished stock. Supposing any man, some twenty years since, any grazier, for instance, had been told what was to happen with respect to Ireland and Scotland. Supposing I had told him, fifteen years ago, what was then the produce of those two parts of the empire, and had foretold to him the wonderful discovery of steam, the facility with which, from Aberdeen, and other parts, enormous quantities of cattle could be brought to London; and what would be the increase of the produce in Ireland within the last twenty or thirty years. I apprehend that the English grazier would have felt a panic twice as great as the panic which has now been felt, and he would have said that it was utterly impossible for him to contend against the competition of Ireland and Scotland. I am quite ready to admit, that with respect to Ireland and Scotland, there was this difference, that they, being parts of the United Kingdom, are entitled to import cattle. ["Hear, hear!"] But the hon. gentleman who cheers me, will not deny that the 10,000 head of cattle, brought from Aberdeen and from Ireland, would have just the same effect in depressing the English market as if the same quantity of cattle had been imported from a foreign country. That is my argument. I am not saying that foreign countries have an equal right with Scotland and Ireland to import cattle, and on the same favourable terms. My argument is, that this great and unexpected increase of importation from Ireland and Scotland would produce the same depressing effect upon the British market as if the increase had come from Hamburg. I say, therefore, that if twenty years since we had told the English grazier what would be the extent of importation at the present moment, from improvements in agriculture and navigation and other causes, he would have imagined that the price of cattle in the home market would be so reduced that he would have no chance of success against such competition. Yet, notwithstanding this competition, the price of cattle and meat has increased, and the price of meat is still increasing to an extent which deserves our most serious attention. As a proof and illustration of this, I will take the navy contracts for fresh meat that have been made within the last four or five years. I find that in 1835 the navy contracts for fresh meat were taken at 35s. and a fraction per cwt.; the price rose, in 1838, to 41s. per cwt., in 1840 to 46s., and in 1841 it had increased, from 35s. in 1835, to 49s. per cwt. This, be it remembered, has occurred, notwithstanding the increased imports of cattle from Ireland and Scotland. I will now refer to the contract prices of meat for Greenwich Hospital. In 1835 the contracts were taken at 40s. a cwt.; and I must observe that the probability is that that institution is supplied with a superior description of meat. I find that the price rose from 40s. in 1836, to 56s. in 1841. Again, I find that contracts for supplies of meat for shipping were made in Leadenhall market in 1835 at 36s. per cwt., and contracts of the same kind were taken there in 1841 at 48s. per cwt. I will now take pork—I mean salt pork for the navy—and I beg the House to recollect that this increased price of provisions tends materially to swell the navy estimates. I find, in 1835, that the contract price of salt pork for the navy was £4 : 14 : 8 per tierce, and in 1841 the price had risen to £7 : 3 : 5. This had not been a sudden rise, but it gradually took place during the intermediate years. In 1836, the price was £4 14s. the tierce; in 1838, it had risen to £5 14s.; in 1839, to £6 11s.; in 1840, to £6 14s.; and in 1841, to £7 : 3 : 5. To show how this affects the public I will refer to Greenwich Hospital. The meat alone for Greenwich Hospital for the consumption of the inmates of that institution, though there was no increase in the number of its inmates, cost £4,420 more in 1841 than it did in 1835. It appears also that the total increase of the household expenses of that institution was £12,000 in 1841 over that in 1835. If such an advance continued to take place in the price of meat, the authorities of the hospital stated that they should find some difficulty in making their present revenue sufficient. I have surely now said enough to show that notwithstanding the great importation from Ireland and Scotland there has been a continuous increase in the price of meat, and that it is desirable to open the ports of the kingdom to a foreign supply. Is not the fact of such a continuous increase in price conclusive proof that something shall be done; and does it not suggest the apprehension that the population is increasing more rapidly than the supply? I am aware

that it has been said that the price of cattle has much increased of late years, and has been occasioned by another circumstance; it has been asserted that it has arisen because a disorder has prevailed among cattle. Now, I would ask, is not this very circumstance a conclusive proof of the necessity of doing something to meet such a case, and that there should be not an absolute prohibition, but a moderate duty which will enable you to go to the places where wholesome cattle are to be met with, that you may have the means of increasing your supply when the home supply is deficient. The amount of duty which I propose in the resolutions before the House is a penny a pound on fresh meat, or on meat slightly salted, and £1 a head on oxen. I apprehend that the chief objection which is entertained against this part of the resolution is directed against the new duty of £1 a head on cattle in the place of the present prohibition. There is an apprehension of danger to the domestic producer of cattle. Now, before I can assent to any apprehension of danger of this kind, I should ask the House to look to the extent of that portion of the continent of Europe from which a supply of cattle can be obtained. Corn, it must be admitted, can be obtained from almost every place where it is produced; it suffers no decrease in substance, and no deterioration in quality, how great soever may be the distance of transport, and it can be as well imported from Odessa or North America as from the Baltic or the opposite coasts of the continent. In the importation of corn, we are subject to competition in the home market from the supply obtained from all Europe, and even America. But is there the same chance of competition with respect to a supply of foreign cattle. Let me, in the first instance, separate the case of lean cattle from that of fat cattle. I think that I can prove satisfactorily to every sensible grazier that there can be nothing but advantage to him from the importation of lean cattle. I think I can show, too, that in no occupation have the profits been reduced in so great a degree of late years as in the fattening of lean cattle. I admit that this trade in cattle has been carried on with great advantage from certain parts of Ireland and Scotland, but I could show that there has been such an increase in the price of lean cattle in this country as to make it impossible for the feeder to realise any profit from fattening them, and that the importation of lean cattle from the continent would be of the greatest benefit to him. I have made inquiries on this point, and have ascertained from several of the most experienced and eminent graziers in the country, that of late years the profit is reduced to nothing, and the feeding would cease altogether were it not for the benefit of the manure. Therefore, by admitting the importation of lean cattle, I shall be conferring a benefit not only on the community, but on that body of agriculturists who are engaged in providing cattle for the supply of the market. But then I may be asked, why not apply the duty according to the weight of the cattle imported? My reply is, that the application of any such principle would defeat the object which I have just alluded to. It must be recollected that the weight of that description of cattle, which I think will be most largely imported—namely, the large lean cattle—is very great. The large lean ox, which would afford a profit to the grazier to fatten, would weigh much more than the small fat cattle which are likely to be imported. By adopting this principle, then, of imposing the duty by weight, you would be discouraging the importation of large lean cattle, the fattening of which might become such a large source of profit to the grazier; and I say, therefore, that the advantages will be very great in applying the duty in the manner I propose. Now, let me refer to the danger which is likely to arise from the importation of fat cattle. I think that I can show in an equally satisfactory manner as I have done in the former case that the apprehensions which are entertained on this point are entirely without foundation. From what countries is the danger from competition in the importation of fat cattle likely to arise? Now it must be recollected that the increase in the cost of foreign cattle would be enhanced, not so much by the amount of duty on the importation as the distance and expense of carriage from the countries from which the cattle would be brought. No one, I suppose, will argue that there is much danger to be apprehended from the competition that would arise from the importation of cattle from Spain and Portugal. I do not suppose that a single ox, fat or lean, will cross the Bay of Biscay for our markets. Let us next take France, and see whether there is any danger likely to arise from the importation of foreign cattle from that country. If any hon. gentleman would take the trouble to inquire, he would find that the

supply of cattle has for some time in France been rapidly falling short of the demand of the population. With respect to France, I can refer to documents which, I think, will prove my case most satisfactorily. I shall refer the House to the accurate statistical information which is prepared on this and other subjects in that country. I say, then, that I can show that there is no danger to be apprehended from France. Supposing, that the rich pastures of France could pour in a supply of fat cattle to an unlimited amount, there would, I admit, be some ground for apprehension; but what are the facts of the case? During late years, France has been an importing country of cattle, and not an exporting country. I find that in 1840—and I have similar returns for several years back, and they vary little as to the general result, there were 12,519 cattle exported from France, and 39,000 cattle imported into it. I will now take sheep—and many of these animals are exported by being sent across the frontier into countries where prices are dearer—and I find that 92,000 were exported in 1840, but during the same year 135,000 were imported into France. The result is, that for the last twelve or fifteen years the importation of cattle and other animals into France has greatly exceeded the amount of exports. In respect to cattle, then, France is an importing country; and yet even with this, I think I can show that the supply of meat there has not been equal to the demand, nor to the wants of the increasing population of the country. I will now take the prices in France, and show that there has been a great rise in prices of late years in that country. We will begin as so far back as 1822. In that year the average price of beef in the eighty-six chief towns of France was 7½d. per kilogramme, and in 1839 it had risen to 9½d.; and in the same period the average price of mutton in those eighty-six towns rose from 7½d. in 1822, to 9½d. in 1839. In Paris there had been a much greater increase. In 1822 the price of all sorts of meat there was 8½d. per kilogramme, and in the chief market on the 10th of March, 1841, the price had risen to 14d., being an increase of 62 per cent. from 1822 to 1841. I will give the prices in Paris of oxen in different years. In 1822 the price of an ox was 296 francs, or about £12; in 1839, 392 francs, or £15 15s.; and in 1841, 459 francs, or £19. Is any danger to be apprehended of a supply of foreign cattle from France, in which the price of oxen has risen within a few years from £12 to £19? In France too as in England, notwithstanding the number of foreign cattle that has been imported, the price has risen, so that it is clear that the supply is not sufficient for the consumption of France. I find that the average consumption of meat in that country, between 1812 and 1816, was in the ratio of 70.51 for each individual; but during the years 1837 and 1840 the ratio was represented by 48.12. I think then that I have shown that there is no danger to be apprehended from competition with France, for here is a rise in the price of meat, and yet a diminution in the consumption, while the country is, I hope, in a state of prosperity, and that being the state of things, there is consequently no danger to be apprehended from a great importation from France. With respect to Belgium our minister there when he noticed the alarm that was felt in this country on the subject, thought it his duty to write to the government, and his words were:—"I observe some allusions in the English papers with respect to the price of meat, and I see it stated that it can be imported from foreign countries into England, and sold at the rate of 3d. per lb. It is, however, clear this supply cannot come from Belgium, since the price here is just twice as high."

There is then a great delusion in supposing that meat can be imported from Belgium and sold in England at any such low prices. I apprehend that Holland is not a country from which we need fear any great importation. There is no fresh land there for cultivation. Spain is out of the question. The Prussian League is, with respect to cattle, an importing and not an exporting country. The only danger, then, is from Holstein and Jutland. But the cost of the conveyance of an ox by sea from either of those countries is greater than from Aberdeen. Remember, also, the enormous increase of supply of cattle from Ireland, and that it has not lowered the prices, and then compare Holstein and Jutland with Yorkshire, and ask yourselves, Is there any prospect of a competition which is likely to interfere with the interests of English agriculturists? If you can make some reduction in price—if you can take any security against the exorbitant price of meat, you will be conferring a great advantage on all classes of the community, and even on the agriculturists

themselves. But the extent of the area of the countries which can come in competition with them is so comparatively small, and the expense and difficulty of bringing cattle here from over the sea are so great, that they need fear no foreign competition. Next compare the quality of the meat. Your meat is far superior to the meat of the continent. When you hear that meat is 4d. per lb. on the continent and 7d. in London, you can draw no safe inference, unless you also compare the quality of both. I do not despair of seeing this country yet exporting fatted cattle. I believe that improvements in science, and the application of chemical processes to agriculture, may produce such results that you may be an exporting country. In confirmation of the opinion which I have just expressed, I can refer to the authority of a document drawn up by a minister of France, in which he names this country amongst others as one from which France could derive a supply of cattle. Again, your mutton is so much superior to that to be obtained on the continent, that I have every reason to believe that instead of this country importing any mutton, we shall export it largely to the continent. Indeed, at this moment, I believe legs of mutton are continually taken from Hull to Hamburg for consumption in the latter. The great advantage that I look to as being likely to arise from the importation of cattle, is that it may establish a check against inordinate prices, and on this principle I vindicate the course proposed to be taken by her Majesty's government in the reduction of the duty. It has been said, why not impose your duty according to the weight or value of the animal imported? But I say, it cannot be done with advantage to the farmer and the consumer? I have already shown, that no such extent of import will take place under the mode proposed by the government, as will prove injurious to the agriculturist, and I have also shown the advantages that will arise to the English grazier from the importation of lean cattle. I have also shown other reasons that operate to prove, that the course that we propose to take is the most convenient one that can be adopted. In addition, I may observe, that every foreign country which imports cattle, and imposes a duty on it, follows the plan which we recommend, and lays the tax on each head of cattle. Throughout the states, forming the Prussian League, foreign cattle are not admitted by the payment of an *ad valorem* duty, or on their weight, but the duty is levied on each animal. In France, there is an import duty of 20f. on each head of cattle; in Belgium also I find a duty of 20f. applied to all cattle. I do not mean to say that no reduction of price will result from my proposition, I should be sorry if that to a small degree were not to be the case; but looking at the state of this metropolis—looking at the great importance of a fair and reasonable supply of meat—and looking at the improvements which have taken place in steam navigation, I cannot think it has derived as much benefit, in the reduction of the price of meat, from them as it ought, and I should be sorry to see it derive no benefit from the proposed reduction. For my own part, I have no hesitation in saying that if, by the operation of this part of the measure, the price of meat be reduced in London, I should consider such result a public benefit. I have laid on a duty of £1 per head on cattle, because I consider the limited area of the countries that can compete with us, and the cost of conveying cattle by steam, and various other circumstances, throw so many difficulties in the way of the importation of foreign cattle, that no danger is to be apprehended to our home supply, and that sufficient protection remains for the grazier. Is the House aware that in London alone there were slaughtered every year not less than 170,000 and 180,000 cattle, and this is independent of all the slaughtered meat sent up to the London market. What an immense quantity of cattle must come in, then, to make any perceptible reduction in the prices! But is it likely that 10,000 fat cattle will come in? I do not apprehend that any one believes that 10,000 additional cattle will be taken to Smithfield from abroad in the course of the year; and if that number were to be taken, would it make any very material difference in the price? I believe, that the general annual consumption of cattle in England is between 13,000,000 and 15,000,000. Is there, then, any just ground for their apprehension. In my mind the reasons are decisive for applying to this question the principles on which we have proceeded in framing the other parts of the tariff. I beg the House to recollect the extraordinary increase that has taken place in the amount of cattle, sheep, and swine imported into this country from Ireland within the last few years. In 1826, the number of cattle imported from

Ireland was 63,000, and in 1840 the number was 120,000. The number of sheep imported from Ireland in 1825 was 72,000, and the number increased to 193,000 in 1840. The number of swine imported from Ireland in 1825 was 65,000, and in 1840 the number was 384,000. Now, notwithstanding this enormous increase in the imports from Ireland, it has not produced the slightest effect in the reduction of the price of meat; on the contrary, the prices of all kinds of meat have gone on rising for the last few years. Taking this circumstance into consideration, and supposing that there were no extensive importation of meat or cattle, and looking also to the constant and continued increase of our population, is there any cause for alarm or consternation on the part of the graziers? In adopting the step which I now recommend to the House on the part of the government, I have no hesitation in declaring that by adopting it we are taking a security against an exorbitant price of meat in times of scarcity. I can illustrate the view by what takes place with respect to horses. There is at present a duty of £1 a head, on the importation of horses, and at that rate the smallest pony and the most valuable charger may be imported. Now look at the price of horses in some parts of the continent. Compare the Norman horse—a beautiful animal—compare the price in France with the price of a horse of the same quality in this country. Why has there not been an importation of them into this country? You only levy a duty of £1 upon all horses, and yet the amount of duty paid on the importation of horses has not been more than £400 per annum for several years past. But what are the facts of the case? Why, that during this time we have been an exporting country for horses. I take the year 1839, I find that 389 horses were imported into this country, which paid a duty of £1 a head; but during the same year, 1,330 horses were exported. In 1840 the number of horses imported, was 505, the number exported was 2,275, and in 1841, the number imported was 339, and the number exported was 4,538. I should rejoice were the same circumstances to take place with respect to cattle, and that we became an exporting country. My hopes are strong on this point, and I do not despair of seeing the day when, by the employment of capital, and the application of chemical science to agriculture, we shall have so far improved the breed of our cattle as to be enabled to export them as well as horses. The cost of a horse is great in this country compared with the price in foreign countries, and yet we have been able to compete with other countries by the superiority of our horses; and I know no natural or unnecessary reason why we should not be able to supply cattle as well as horses. These, then, are the grounds on which the measure of her Majesty's government has been framed. I hope that in the observations which I have addressed to the House, that I have so far satisfied the mind of my hon. friend (Mr. Miles) as to induce him to drop the amendment of which he has given notice. At any rate, if he persists in pressing it, I am prepared to meet it, and shall offer it a respectful but decided resistance. And I shall certainly be curious to know the arguments upon which, considering the gradual but rapid rise of price in this country, and the limited alteration proposed in the tariff—I shall listen with interest to the arguments by which he supports the necessity for an increased duty on the importation of foreign cattle. I deeply regret that the tariff proposed by her Majesty's government should have had undue advantage taken of it by pretended sympathisers with the supposed sufferers to raise a panic relating to it. I have a sincere and cordial respect for the interests which apprehended that they would be affected by it, and I have therefore felt it my duty to enter into these details. Subsequent consideration and free communication with all parties have confirmed the government in the opinion that these measures will be attended with great public advantage—that they will produce general advantage to all classes, including the agricultural class, by the reduction which we propose to make in foreign meat and cattle, and, above all, the removal of that complete prohibition which we found when we approached the subject. Not wishing to enter upon a question which has been adopted by Parliament—I mean the question of the Corn-laws—wishing to postpone the question of sugar, till the alteration of which the noble lord has given notice comes under discussion—not wishing to prejudice that question by an imperfect reference to it, I have fulfilled the purpose for which I rose—namely, to state the general scope and object of the commercial arrangements proposed by her Majesty's government, and to vindicate those points which have been most subjected to animadversion. I know that many gentlemen who are



strong advocates for free-trade, may consider that I have not gone far enough. I believe that on the general principle of free-trade, there is now no great difference of opinion, and that all agree in the general rule that we should purchase in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest. [Cheers.] I know the meaning of that cheer. I do not now wish to raise a discussion on the Corn-laws, or the sugar duties, which I contend, however, are exceptions to the general rule. I have stated the grounds, on more than one occasion, why I consider these exceptions to the general rule, and I will not go into the question now. I know that I may be met with the complaints of gentlemen opposite, of the limited extent to which I have applied the general principle to which I have adverted to these important articles. I have felt satisfied that it was inexpedient to apply such important changes as I have heard suggested to these important interests. I thought, after the best consideration that I could give to the subject, that if I proposed a greater change in the Corn-laws than that which I submitted to the consideration of the House, I should only aggravate the distresses of the country, and only increase the alarm which prevailed amongst important interests. I think that I have proposed, and the legislature has sanctioned, as great a change in the Corn-laws as was just or prudent, considering the engagements existing between landlord and tenant, and also the large amount of capital which has been applied to the cultivation of the soil. Under these circumstances, I think that we have made as great a change as was consistent with the nature of the subject. I shall postpone what I have to say on the subject of the sugar duties until the noble lord regularly comes forward with the motion of which he has given notice, and I shall then be ready to state the reasons which have induced her Majesty's government to adopt the course which they have. It is impossible, in dealing in general with such immense and extensive interests, to proceed always by a strict application of the general principle, for in such cases it is of the utmost importance to proceed with caution. I believe that the true friend to general principle will argue, that it is not expedient or proper to propose such a change as would produce so much individual injury as to cause general complaint, and excite a strong sympathy. I contemplate the matter in the same point of view, as this question was contemplated by a distinguished statesman, now no more, with whom it was my good fortune to act in 1825. That eminent man then proposed to make some changes in the commercial and colonial policy of the country, but the proposition which he brought forward in 1825, was not so extensive as that which I have had the honour of submitting to the House. Those measures had my cordial support and concurrence. Mr. Huskisson, when he brought them forward, prefaced his speech with these observations:—"I am not anxious to give effect to new principles, where circumstances do not call for their application; feeling as I do, from no small experience in public business—and every day confirms that feeling—how much, in the vast and complex interests of this country, all general theories, however incontrovertible in the abstract, require to be weighed with a calm circumspection, to be directed by a temperate discretion, and to be adapted to all the existing relations of society with a careful hand, and a due regard to the establishments and institutions which have grown up under those relations."

These I think are just and profound and wise opinions, and in the temper in which Mr. Huskisson acted, I and my colleagues have attempted to remodel and simplify the tariff, by removing the prohibition on some articles, and by the reduction of duty on others, and we have proceeded with such care and caution as to produce as small an amount of individual suffering as was compatible with the end in view. I regret any suffering that may be inflicted on any parties, but if we admitted the principle of putting off the question on that account, I fear that we should have to postpone the consideration of all such questions to an indefinite period. I sincerely hope that the general result of this and the other measures will be ample compensation for any individual suffering that may be inflicted, and that the general result of the whole will be to increase the demand for the employment of industry, and which would also increase the means of the people to command the comforts and necessities of life. We have made this proposal at a time of very considerable financial embarrassment, but in doing so, we have set an example in Europe, we have declared that we will not seek to improve our finances by increasing the duties on imports. Amidst all our financial difficulties, we have trusted to other means for replenishing

the exchequer. In the face of all these difficulties, we have come forward with a proposal greatly reducing the restrictions, and imposts on foreign articles. I deeply regret to have it to say, that other enlightened communities have not acted upon this principle. We have reserved many articles from immediate reduction, in the hope that ere long, we may attain that which we consider just and beneficial to all,—namely, increased facilities for our exports in return. At the same time I am bound to say, that it is for the interest of this country to buy cheap, whether other countries will buy cheap from us or no. We have a right to exhaust all means to induce them to do justice, but if they persevere in refusing, the penalty is on us, if we do not buy in the cheapest market. But I believe firmly, that the example which England is now setting, will ultimately prevail. The countries I speak of may hope to retrieve their financial difficulties by the adoption of a different course from that which we pursue; they may think to increase the revenue by increasing the imposts on foreign manufactures, but they may rely on it they will here be met by that very influential corrective of high duties—the smuggler. They can rest only on one of two measures to correct the evils arising from high duties—they must either resort to such an extensive establishment, that it will eat up all the profits, or if they neglect this, and merely impose exorbitant duties, without keeping up an exorbitant establishment, they will find that almost the entire demand for the various articles will be supplied by smugglers, and those things will be introduced by an illicit trade, which their imposts prevent the introduction of legally, and with advantage to themselves. If you look at the countries in which high protection, prohibitory protection is kept up, you will gradually find the people of those countries more and more comparing our example and the results of it, with the principle acted upon amongst themselves and the results of it. Take Spain, for instance, where, as Mr. Huskisson, among others, had pointed out, protective prohibitory duties existed in their most extensive form; what had been the effect of this system there? Eternal conflicts on the frontier, and no revenue. I regret, I say, that in other enlightened countries there is not as yet evinced a disposition to follow the example which we are now setting: and I very much regret to see any thing of this illiberal spirit in the United States, but I at the same time feel that the people of those states are too enlightened not to see that our example ought to be followed, and that they will, ere long, take care that it is followed. In Russia, attempts have been made, at most enormous and unprofitable expense, to introduce manufactures; but I am sure that before long the great pecuniary loss sustained in that country, by these attempts to force manufactures, will bring conviction to the minds of the people of their futility. I feel certain that the example of England adopted at this time of commercial and financial difficulty—our determination to pursue one path in the right course, will operate on foreign nations; but if we find, that our example is not followed—if we find that, instead of reducing the duties on our manufactures, they resort to the impolicy of increasing them, still this ought not, in my opinion, to operate as a discouragement to us to act on the principles which we believe to be sound,—those principles which will not only be immediately profitable to us, but the example of which will ultimately ensure that general application of them, which will confer reciprocal benefit both on ourselves and on all those who are wise enough to follow it.

After a short discussion, the order of the day was read for the House resolving itself into committee on the Customs' Duties Acts.

On the motion that the Speaker do now leave the chair—Major Vivian rose to move “for any additional details which may have been supplied by Mr. Meek to the government, relative to the importation of agricultural produce, salt provisions, &c., or any passage or passages which may have been suppressed.”

Lord Worsley seconded the motion.

Sir Robert Peel said, as the House is now somewhat more full than when I made my statement at an earlier part of the evening, I will refer to what I then stated. I stated what was the fact, that for several recent years a gradual advance had taken place in the price of provisions. I took the year 1835, when I said distinctly that the price of meat and pork was at its lowest point, and I showed that from 1835 to 1840, a progressive increase of price had taken place—I stated that at the same time a considerable increase had taken place in the price of cattle imported from Ireland. I stated, that taking the prices at Greenwich Hospital in

1840, as compared with 1835, the difference of price in meat alone made a difference in the cost of that establishment for that year of not less than £4000. I then took the price of provisions in France and Belgium and this country, and I argued, from the gradual and progressive advance in the price of provisions in those countries that there were no grounds for the apprehensions that were entertained in some part of the country, that the price of cattle would be materially lessened by importation from those countries. With respect to Holstein and Jutland, I admitted that there might be some supply, but that there was no probability of such an increase as would have any serious effect on the price of provisions in this country—seeing that within the last six years, notwithstanding the facilities afforded by steam navigation, the prices of meat in most of the public establishments had progressively increased during each of these years. Seeing that this had taken place, I stated that I thought the time was come when competition with respect to live animals and meat might be safely permitted. This was the statement which I made to the House with respect to this part of the subject. Now, with respect to the particular motion before the House, I must say, that there must have been somewhere or other a gross breach of trust. These papers were printed solely for the use of the government. The whole of the material information was extracted from them, and given to the House. So much was this the case that it might be remarked that Mr. Meek was never alluded to, and the measures proposed by the government were at variance with the information furnished by Mr. Meek. But supposing that those papers, containing information procured by a servant of the government for the service of the government, contained information given by an individual who said, that he would communicate all the information in his power, but he did not wish to have his name made public. Supposing this to be the case, does the House think that it would have a right to compel the government to disclose the name of that individual. The government gave the House all the information they possessed; they gave the House all the facts; and as to the suppression of particular passages, the charge is altogether without foundation. We gave you the prices of meat at Hamburg—we gave you the prices taken for the navy contracts—we gave you every thing material—but a gentleman officially connected with the Victualling office makes an observation with respect to the expediency of taking the contracts for the navy from other countries; and does the House think that we ought to give this communication, intended for the government alone? Well, then, take the case of an individual supplying information for the use of the government, requesting that his name might not be disclosed. Would it not, I ask, be a breach of all confidence to disclose the name of that individual? We have given you all the information with reference to the tenor of the measures we have proposed. We have given you the price of the contracts, and you may have the navy contracts if you think it necessary; but I think it would be going too far, when a gentleman connected with the Victualling office makes a suggestion to the government, that the government should be called upon to communicate that information to the House. There is the other case of an individual communicating information to the government, under the assurance that his name will not be disclosed, and I say that if the House compels us to give this information there is an end to all confidence. We have withheld nothing in the shape of information contained in the report of Mr. Meek. We have given you all the facts. In the exercise of our discretion we have withheld particular passages, which I maintain we were justified in doing, I say, then, considering that there has been a gross breach of confidence on the part of somebody in giving to the hon. member information intended for the government, I trust that the House will not compel the government to give information that has been so presented to them.

The House divided on the question that the Speaker do now leave the chair. Ayes, 219; Noes, 152; majority, 67.

The House went into committee, *pro forma*, and resumed, committee to sit again.

MAY 13, 1842.

The Order of the Day was read for going into Committee on the Customs' Acts. On the question being put that the Speaker do now leave the Chair—

Viscount Howick moved the following resolution, "That in making a new arrange-

ment of the customs' duties, it is not expedient to impose different rates of duty upon the same articles when imported from foreign countries or from British possessions, in any case where no such difference now exists; and that in those cases in which such a difference already exists, it is not expedient that it should be increased."

SIR ROBERT PEEL:—I was in hopes, until I heard the speech of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Baring) that the object of the noble lord was to save us the trouble and delay of a discussion on details, and that we were to get rid of further discussion by the motion of the noble lord on the general principle of the tariff, as far as the differential duties between articles the production of the colonies to those produced in foreign countries were concerned; but I am afraid, from the speech of the right hon. gentleman who has just sat down, that the object of the noble lord will not be accomplished, for the right hon. gentleman tells us that when we enter into the details of the tariff, then we must go into the consideration of these minute articles. Now, I confess I thought, from the indignation to which the right hon. gentleman gave vent with respect to medlars, that it was his intention to promote discussion on details on the present occasion. I thought that the noble lord had given notice of this motion for the purpose of rescuing the right hon. gentleman from a difficulty, for if the noble lord had not given notice of his motion, the division must have been taken on some individual article of the tariff. That article, the first in the list, would have been colonial asses, which so greatly excited the right hon. gentleman's indignation the other night—and he would have had no alternative but to try this great question on the subject of imposing a duty of 1s. 3d. a-head on colonial asses. I certainly thought that the noble lord had brought forward his motion by way of a *pons asinorum* for the right hon. gentleman. I think we shall do better by following the example of the noble lord, and discussing the question of principle rather than by entering into these details, which I should have been disposed, nevertheless, to treat in a better temper than the right hon. gentleman has exhibited with regard to the subject of medlars, but which, in my opinion, would be, with better judgment, reserved for an earlier period of the evening, if we are to enter upon them at all. The right hon. gentleman explained to those hon. members who did not hear the early part of the discussion, the nature of the motion made by the noble lord (Lord Howick), but I protest against the correctness of the exposition given by the right hon. gentleman. And I beg those hon. gentlemen who were not present and did not hear the early part of the debate, to hear my version of the noble lord's motion. It is neither more nor less than this:—"That in making a new arrangement of the customs' duties it is not expedient to impose different rates of duty upon the same articles when imported from foreign countries or from British possessions in any case where no such difference now exists; and that in those cases in which such a difference already exists, it is not expedient that it should be increased."

That is the question. We are required to lay down an abstract proposition that it is not desirable to raise in any case the duty on a commodity, the produce of foreign countries, above the duty on the same article produced in a colony. We are to lay down that as a principle. We are not merely to correct an error committed with respect to an individual article, but we are to lay this down as a principle of legislation, that the difference is not to be increased. But what is the principle for which the noble lord contends? The principle is this: that you shall treat your colonies, without discrimination, as foreign countries in this respect. The noble lord will not deny that such is the proposition for which he contends. But the right hon. gentleman and his friends, when in office, did not adhere to this rule. "True," replies the right hon. gentleman, "there were slight exceptions. There was rough rice and bees'-wax from the western coast of Africa." And what account does the right hon. gentleman give of the motive which induced them to take this course? He says, "If you can confer a benefit on the natives of Africa, it would be by encouraging their trade. Give them the benefit of differential duties, and you will encourage their attention to domestic industry; and you cannot confer a greater benefit on a country like Africa than by encouraging the natives to devote themselves to industry." But what becomes of the argument of the noble lord about inflicting injury on our colonies? The noble lord says, "You only disturb the application of capital; and, under a notion of conferring a benefit, you are inflicting future injury." What humanity was it, then, to encourage the growth of rough rice on the coast of Africa?

If the noble lord's principle were correct, there was no humanity in giving peculiar encouragement and facilities to African produce. Humanity ought to have dictated the establishment of the same rate of duty on the productions of Africa and those of foreign countries. But the great principle of the noble lord, on which the House is to decide to-night, is, whether it be just, with respect to all articles the produce of your colonies, that the same rate of duty should apply as applies to articles the produce of foreign countries? If that principle be correct there is an end of your colonial system. The noble lord's argument strikes at the foundation of our colonial connection. Is it just to say to the colonies, "You shall import British articles on a more favourable footing than those of foreign nations?" You are at the present moment passing an act through the House giving to British manufacturers advantages in the colonial markets—you restrict commercial intercourse with the colonies by preventing them from choosing their markets. Would it then, I ask, be just to say to the colonies, "You shall admit the manufactures of Great Britain on more favourable terms than the produce of foreign countries, but Great Britain shall give your produce no preference whatever?" Yet that is the principle for which the noble lord contends. Then, would the noble lord do away with the privileges which British manufactures enjoy in the colonies? If he would, let me ask him, why would he maintain the colonies at all? The colonies are, according to the noble lord, to have the unlimited right to buy in the cheapest market. This country ought to show no preference to colonial produce. If you think fit, for purposes of revenue, to lay a duty of 30 per cent. on any articles coming from Russia or France, in that case, according to the noble lord's principle, you ought indiscriminately to lay the same rate on articles the produce of a colony. Be it so; but let me ask the noble lord, why we should be at the expense of defending these colonies? The noble lord says, "See what results followed in the United States by abolishing these distinctions since the independence of the United States was established—since the system of privilege and protection has been abolished?" Be it so; but why retain the colonies if we are to derive no advantage whatever in respect to commercial intercourse—no advantages to navigation—no exclusive privileges for British shipping? Why abandon these advantages, whether real or supposed, and then garrison Canada with 15,000 men? The noble lord's principle is to let the colonies govern themselves, and declare their separation from this country; for it is quite clear that our connection with the colonies can be of no possible advantage if we incur all the obligations of defence, but in every other respect place them on the footing of foreign countries. It appears to me that the colonies can be nothing but an onerous obligation to this country, if the principle of the noble lord be true. The noble lord says that Mr. Huskisson's principles were adverse to the course now pursued. What! Mr. Huskisson, who proposed that Canada should be allowed to sell her corn in the British market at a fixed duty of 5s. With the noble lord's resolution in force it would have been impossible for Mr. Huskisson to have applied, as he did, his principle to the sugar of the Mauritius, lowering the duty on it to 10s. the cwt. It would have been impossible for Mr. Huskisson, in 1826 or 1827, to have equalised the duty on the sugar of the Mauritius and that produced in the West Indies, if the House of Commons had determined to act on the principle laid down by the noble lord. What did Mr. Huskisson say with respect to the East Indies? Mr. Huskisson complained of the conduct of the United States in refusing to our manufactures the privileges which had been given to other manufactures. Mr. Huskisson intimated that there were two articles, the produce of the United States, of which we might derive an abundant supply from our own colonies. Mr. Huskisson said, "We could, he was satisfied, soon be abundantly supplied with tobacco from the East Indies, by wise and prudent inducements held out to induce its improved cultivation." The rice of India would soon (indeed it was already doing so) usurp the place in our list of imports which that of Carolina had held. In other articles the same change would soon be observed. With reference to cotton, that raw article so essential in our great staple trade, it was only necessary to give its culture in India the same encouragement and protection which the indigo-trade had obtained to ensure its cultivation with equal success, and the growth of as good, as durable, and as fine an article. The result would soon be, that the cotton of India would rival and supplant the cotton of the western world, as the indigo of India already excelled that of Guatemala, to

which it was formerly so much inferior, and would still have continued so but for the judicial encouragement afforded to it.

Therefore, for the noble lord to contend that Mr. Huskisson was the patron of the principle that colonial articles in all cases should be subjected to the duty to which foreign articles were exposed, is entirely inconsistent with the fact. Take the case in India. You have ruined the cotton manufactures of India by the importation of your own. You insist upon India receiving it upon most favourable terms to yourself. If India attempted to get a revenue by subjecting your cotton manufactures to a duty you would take means to prevent it. But you contend that your cotton manufactures shall be introduced into India with great advantage, as compared with the manufactures of other states; and that the produce of India shall be subject to all the duties to which the produce of foreign states is subject. Is there any justice in that arrangement? Will the noble lord be prepared in contending for this principle to subvert altogether the colonial interests? Are you prepared, for the purpose of increasing your manufactures in the colonies, to insist upon your manufactures being introduced at lower rates than the manufactures of other countries? I put it to any rational man who is actuated by equitable principles, whether it could be justly concurrent with the maintenance of the advantages which you derive from those colonies to contend that colonial produce shall have no advantage? It would be altogether inconsistent. You have told your colonies that you will maintain your connexion with them; you have pledged yourself to the Canadas to maintain your connexion with them; and I should deeply regret if the House of Commons should propose either one or the other of these alternatives—either to tell the Canadas that “There must be no distinction in favour of British manufactures; you are at liberty to introduce French goods and the manufactures of other countries on terms equally advantageous with those on which British articles are imported;” or to take this other and still more impolitic course, and say, “We insist upon your introducing British goods, and upon depriving you of the discretion of carrying on intercourse with other countries in the cheapest manner—namely, by the ships of other countries; but, with respect to the introduction of your goods, they must be introduced upon the same footing as French and other foreign articles.” Why, sir, to use such language as this, and to adopt such a course as this now suggested, would place us in that situation with our colonies that nothing but physical force could enable us satisfactorily to maintain any longer the connection. Sir, again I must repeat that I cannot answer for the justice with which every subject is treated, with respect to those 600 or 700 articles set forth in the tariff. I think it is impossible to answer for the justice of all those discriminating duties. If the course you mean to pursue be this—namely, to put us to the proof with respect to every article here described—if you take one article with the sum of 6*d.* attached to it, and say “here I put it to you to defend this article at 6*d.*, and this other which is marked at 9*d.*” I say, Sir, that by adopting such a course of proceeding towards us, we should find it utterly impossible to give any satisfaction. Hon. members must consider the complicated relationship of this country. They must consider the immense extent of capital which is involved—they must consider the enormous extent of our colonial empire, and the extensive field of our commerce. With these considerations they must be aware of the danger that would naturally arise by any attempt at legislation which would rashly shake the foundations of the empire. You must decide on the whole of those financial and commercial measures. And you must look to the practical results which were likely to follow. We have done all that a wise and prudent government could do for the purpose of adopting this question. We have made an effort to restore the finances of the country and relieve the spirit of industry. I appeal to your justice to decide upon these measures as a whole, rather than to sacrifice the grand object we have in view by descanting upon its minute parts, in respect to which I confess it would be most difficult to give satisfactory and conclusive proofs in favour of. If this House should assent to this, I shall still hope that, as the course we have pursued has been hitherto approved of, and as the House has already decided upon the general principles involved in the noble lord’s amendment, we shall be still allowed to carry out our objects without being called upon to account for every item of the tariff. The amendment of the noble lord cannot be

entertained, for we are not yet prepared to create that alarm throughout Canadas and the whole of our colonial empire, which such a proposition well calculated to do; for, by adopting it, you would be only proclaiming a principle that they should be treated, in respect to colonial intercourse, in the same manner, and upon no more advantageous terms, than we should treat them. This was but a unilateral course, which, in justice to our own interests as those of our colonies, we cannot think of pursuing. [Viscount Howick against any great alterations being made.] Why, I would ask, is not the noble lord's principle this—that it must be desirable to maintain with respect to the produce of the colonies and that of other countries the same footing. The noble lord stated that you were doing an injury to the colonies by supporting their permanent interest—his principle was this, that colonial produce ought not to be introduced on a more favoured footing than that of foreign produce. The noble lord said, the system we pursued on this subject was vicious, protesting against that unqualified and exceptionless doctrine—namely, that we ought to treat Canada in respect to colonial and commercial intercourse on the same footing as other countries. If such a proposition be entertained, it would end at once to our colonial empire, and to maintain it will only be to place a burden on ourselves. If you sanction this proposition, then you ought to let the colonies assert their own independence, and provide for their own defence.

The House divided on the question that the Chairman do leave the chair: Ayes, 281; Noes, 108; majority 173.

The House went into Committee, and resumed; the chairman reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again.

## CUSTOMS ACTS—THE TARIFF—CATTLE.

MAY 23, 1842.

The House in Committee. On the first resolution being proposed,—Mr. Miles moved as an amendment—"That the duties to be levied on all live stock imported from foreign countries for the purposes of food, be taken by weight."

SIR R. PEEL: I was very desirous to be able to confine my observations to the particular subject now under discussion—whether it be wise to remove the prohibition which now exists on the importation of foreign cattle and meat—substituting a moderate duty. But the noble lord has invited a discussion on other points—the Corn-laws, and the sugar duty. With regard to the sugar duty, there will be an opportunity of discussing that question; and I shall then state why we think that there are reasons which except sugar from the application of the general principles of the tariff. As to the Corn-laws, any one would have inferred from the speech of the noble lord, that he was of opinion that, under all circumstances, and without any qualification, the people of this country should have a command of the cheapest food; but I take it that the noble lord, the author of an 8s. duty, must himself impose some restriction on that principle for which to-night he seems inclined to contend. He must admit that, under all circumstances, it is not expedient without reference to other considerations that the people should have the cheapest food; because otherwise his principle will be entirely at variance with his own proposal of an 8s. duty on wheat. The noble lord must admit either that there are special burdens in agriculture which justify that duty, or that it is desirable to give some protection to domestic agriculture; and the question then between me and the noble lord, is not a question of principle—it is a question of degree. I propose a graduated duty. The noble lord proposes a fixed duty; but in vindication of his 8s. fixed duty, the noble lord must contend against the principle which he has put forward to-night, taken without qualification or exception; and I therefore appeal to the noble lord's assistance in support of my graduated scale. I do not, however, now wish to revive the discussion on the Corn-law; but I thought that the noble lord had charged me with deluding the farmers; and had said, that if I had put forward any such proposition before the last election, the agricultural constituencies would not have implied an

opinion so strongly in my favour; but now the noble lord contends that I have shown undue favour to the farmer, and have proposed a Corn-law at variance with the principles of the tariff. Surely, it is impossible for the noble lord to contend, that I have deceived the farmer by holding out false expectations of protection, and, on the other hand, that I have shown him undue favour. I come now to this particular proposition; I am afraid that unless I am able to apply myself to the particular proposals as they are made, there can be no prospect of bringing these discussions to a close; and I will, therefore, limit myself to the single point, whether it be expedient to continue the existing prohibition, or to impose the duty proposed by the government; and I discuss the question with my hon. friend with perfect freedom and candour; I entirely differ from him in opinion upon this subject; but I am not, on that account, insensible to or ungrateful for the support which I have received in respect to my proposal of an Income-tax. Yes! I have received from the agricultural body, this session, most valuable and generous support of the proposals which I have made; and the differences which may exist between us cannot disturb my grateful sense of their assistance; and, no doubt, greatly to the disappointment of some who now express dissent. I have not the least fear that the differences of to-night will continue beyond to-night. I, however, now maintain my own opinion; it seems to me that the interests of the country do require that the prohibition on the importation of foreign cattle should be removed, and I think that the proposal which I have made will benefit all classes of the community. When I spoke last, there was a prevalent apprehension and alarm at the proposal which I had made. I then said, that it was not consistent with the part of a true friend of the agriculturists to assume, that that panic was well-founded; the reason which I gave for not acting on those apprehensions, was my belief that it would be found, before we got to the end of the tariff, that those apprehensions were at an end; and the communications which I have received from the country prove the correctness of that impression. I think I may say that the panic has already passed away. I said at that time that the then diminution in the price of cattle was attributable to other concurrent causes, as the price of fodder; and I felt, besides, very confident that when the sober judgment of the country was applied to the consideration of this subject, those apprehensions would give way to the natural consequences of that sober judgment. Now, I have looked into a country paper, and the country papers afford a very good indication of the feeling of the country, and I take this account which is a report from Liverpool:—"The price of cattle is still rising; there was a large supply in the market; but the prices were very high; we stated a fortnight ago, that the diminution in price was the consequence of a mere panic, and would not continue."

If, then, I had acted on the panic, I should have been left in the lurch by the panic. I will now read another extract:—

"LIVERPOOL, Monday, May 16.

"We have had rather a large supply of cattle; but the prices are very high; beef 6½d. to 7d.; mutton 7d. to 7½d."

Now the price of beef and mutton being 7d. and 7½d. at Liverpool, I put it to every intelligent gentleman in this House, whether it is right to continue the present prohibition? Why do I take Liverpool? Because Liverpool is the port into which the Irish supplies enter. Now, supposing twenty years since any one had said to a Liverpool man, "Look at the present supply of Irish cattle, I will tell you what it will be twenty years hence," wouldn't his natural answer have been, "Why, the English graziers will be ruined." In 1820, the number of cows and oxen brought from Ireland—I am not sure whether into England or Liverpool only—was 16,966; and on an average of the last five years, there have been brought from Ireland into the port of Liverpool alone 472,200 cows and oxen, or upon an average about 94,400 in each year. What has been the effect of that enormous increase on the prices? So far from the English grazier being injured, the prices have risen, notwithstanding that large increase. Under these circumstances, is it wise to continue the present prohibition? Are we not bound to look for a wider area whence to draw our supply? Take the average of the five years preceding the last five, and the importation into Liverpool from Ireland was 54,800; compare that with the average of the five following years, which was 94,400; and do not these facts suggest important



considerations? Is it not a just and almost necessary inference, that the population is increasing more rapidly than the supply? Whence, then, is our supply to come? Look at France, Holland, Belgium, and the States of the German Confederation—their population is sixty-five millions of inhabitants; they require cattle for their own supply of food; they are all, I believe, importing countries, and in each of them I am afraid the price of cattle and meat is rising, and the consumption increasing in proportion to the population. The noble lord says,—“At one time you contend you ought to remove the prohibition, and at another time you say it will not materially affect the price of meat in this country.”

I must say that I wish it would reduce the prices, for I consider the price of meat too high. I take this proof of it:—Take Liverpool. I see that, by the great improvements in steam navigation, there are forwarded large supplies of cattle from Aberdeen, and other parts of Scotland into Liverpool, and yet I see no benefit in that great community from such extensive importation. On the contrary, I see a progressive rise in the price of food. I say, then, that that is a conclusive proof of the necessity of removing the prohibition, and conclusive of the policy of widening the supply. If you tell me there is great alarm—a great panic in the markets, I am bound to say that I think that alarm unfounded. But what I admit to be the chief benefit from this alteration is this, that we are taking a new security against the constant progressive rise of the price of food in consequence of the diminution of the supply in this country, and the consequent rise of price of foreign cattle, I think that the foreigner will be ready to part with his cattle at a diminution of price of 25 per cent. At the same time, I am obliged to say, that when I consider the countries of Europe from which cattle can be introduced, I find them so few that I cannot think there will be any great diminution in the price of meat. Three things are always put out of consideration, and those are—the quantity of cattle, the quality of the meat, and the inevitable consequence of the removal of the prohibition in increasing the price of meat upon the continent. Depend upon it, you cannot open the markets of this country without, in some degree, raising the price of meat in other countries; and when my hon. friend refers me to the prices of 4d. and 5d. per pound, he must recollect that those are the prices with this prohibition and with the English markets closed to the foreigner; but if you open the English market the necessary consequence will be some rise in the price abroad. But always bear in mind the quality of the meat, and don't think that meat at 4d. per pound in Hamburg or Holstein, if such be the price, is such meat as that at 8d. per pound in Liverpool or London. The things are perfectly different. Meat of an equal quality with that which we consume in London, I very much doubt whether any place on the continent could supply at a less price than 6d. instead of 4d. I cannot, however, but think that there will be advantage from this free intercourse, by the improvements in our breed of cattle in this country. I was very much struck with an account of a meeting at which the hon. member for Berkshire was present, I believe last year, of that most useful institution, founded mainly by Lord Spencer, and with which I have the honour to be connected—I mean the Royal Agricultural Society of England. I read this morning, the account of what passed at that meeting, which I will quote to the House:—“Sir Francis A. Mackenzie, Bart., informed the council that he had at length succeeded, through the agency of his friend, the celebrated geologist and writer on fossil fishes, Professor Agassiz, in obtaining possession of a breeding stock, which, for the last twenty-three years, since his first visit to Switzerland, he had been most desirous to secure for this country; and that four of the finest bulls that Switzerland could produce were on their way to England, and would arrive to the consignment of Mr. Hanbury, banker, in Lombard-street, in the course of a few days. Sir Francis, in describing this stock, remarks, ‘I certainly never saw more beautiful cattle than the Swiss, not even in Yorkshire, and they combine both milking and fattening qualities, which is an immense advantage; the proof of the first is their being the cows which in Lombardy are only bought for making Parmesan cheese; and I hope that the shapes of the animals now sent will, to the best judges, prove that they possess the latter quality by their perfect shapes.’ Professor Agassiz not being limited in price, procured for Sir Francis Mackenzie four of the finest and handsomest young bulls that Switzerland could produce; and although the Professor considers the outlay already too large in effecting this object, Sir Francis expressed

the conviction he felt that he should be rewarded if the blood was found to do good to our English breeds, by crossing them."

It is a great advantage, then, to the breeding of cattle in this country, to have an unlimited access to the cattle of the continent; and with our skill and application of chemical science to agriculture, it cannot be denied that if this intercourse with the continent be admitted, there will be great benefit resulting from it. I look back and find that scarcely a year has passed without many applications having been made to the treasury, to permit bulls and other animals of various breeds to be imported from parts of the continent. In one or two cases, permission was given; but it is, I need hardly say, a very different thing to do this by a mere exercise of favour against the law in a few isolated cases, and to provide for regular access, on the part of our agriculturists, to the best continental breeds. But, with the spirit, the industry, and the enterprise of the British farmer, I believe we should speedily find ourselves thoroughly able to compete with any country as to the supply of cattle. The only question then remaining is, whether the duty shall be fixed, or according to weight? Surely a strong proof of the propriety of imposing a fixed duty is, that it is adopted in all foreign countries, admitting importation of live stock. In Austria, the duty on an ox is 8*s.*; in Belgium, it is 10*s.*; in France, £2; in Germany 15*s.*; in Holland, £1 3*s.* 4*d.*; the same reason applying in those countries as in this, if any valid reason there be, for preferring a duty levied according to weight. And let the House mark this. My hon. friend will avoid saying what duty by weight he would wish. Would he desire one of 2*s.* 6*d.* per cwt? No; he of course does not deny that he wishes a higher degree of protection than I propose; and he would doubtless desire a duty of 6*s.* or 8*s.* per cwt.; but he abstains from naming any duty; he will not venture to specify the amount per cwt. he wishes. But, then, I say that this ought to be fully explained, before you proceed to vote for any abstract proposition. My hon. friend should really tell us what is the practical purport of his proposal, otherwise it would be a mere delusion voting upon his motion. Of course he thinks that £1 per head is not a sufficient protection, and he desires a higher one; but, then, I think that unless we clearly comprehend his practical intention, many members may be entrapped into a vote; for there are those, I can well understand, who would rather have 2*s.* 6*d.* per cwt. as the duty than £1 per head. In that case, observe that an ox weighing 4 cwt. would only pay 10*s.* duty—a result which might not entirely tend to diminish the "panic" of the farmers, nor to answer the object of my hon. friend. My hon. friend wishes really for an increase of protection, which would involve the interposing of greater difficulties to the admission of food for the people, for he should not forget that the levying of the duty by weight would create such an unavoidable delay and trouble at landing, as would materially retard and obstruct the importation of stock on any terms arranged. On that ground I oppose it. My belief is, that the duty of £1 per head will be sufficient. I stated that to a deputation of agriculturists, who waited upon me to press their arguments in favour of higher protection. To their demand I could not, I cannot accede; for I believe that the interests of the community require that there shall be a diminution of the protective duty. I have a deep impression, a firm conviction, that population is increasing more rapidly than the supply of provision in this country, and that no advantage can be derived by the agriculturists from keeping up higher duties than I propose. My hon. friend indeed said, fattening of cattle produced in this country no profit. Why not? Is it not because in certain districts, producing lean cattle, the most enormous prices are charged for them, so that the profit of fattening is done away with? What then we want is, to bring in a competition, which may give you the benefit of the lean cattle. As to fat cattle fetching £25 or £30 a head, consider the difficulties of bringing them from foreign ports: reflect that the freight cannot be inconsiderable, could hardly be below £2 a head, and would probably be augmented. Consider, too, the inevitable risk of a sea-passage, and remember that there can be no insurance against the damage, though there may be against the entire loss of cattle thus transported across the sea; all these things gave a real practical protection, over and above the duty. My interests are connected with the welfare of agriculture, but I should be ready, I trust, to sacrifice all personal interest, even if I imagined injury to myself would be the consequence of the measure I propose; but I really can assume to myself no such credit, for I

believe that agriculture will derive, not injury, but advantage, from that measure, persuaded as I am that the effect will be, that while on the one hand all the unnecessary odium attaching to agricultural protection will be avoided, the establishment of a regular but moderate supply from the continent will keep prices at a more equal rate here and abroad, and on a level in this country, more consistent with the general welfare of the community. I am therefore, Sir, compelled, though with regret, to differ entirely from my hon. friend; I am so firmly persuaded that justice to consumers requires the establishment of increased facilities for the admission of food, and that the measure is by no means adverse to the best interests of the agriculturists themselves, that I can make no concession. I must adhere to my original proposition, which I trust the House will, by a large majority, support, thus putting an end to uncertainty and alarm, and passing a measure which I do believe will be as beneficial to the agriculturists as to the rest of the community.

Mr. Miles's proposition was negatived by a majority of 267.

MAY 24, 1842.

House in Committee. On the question that the duty on oxen and bulls be 20s. per head from foreign countries, and 10s. per head from British possessions: Mr. Miles proposed that, in lieu of a duty of 20s. per head for oxen and bulls, there be levied a duty of 5s. 6d. per cwt. He was of opinion that if the right hon. baronet would accede to this alteration, all the alarm of the agricultural body would be at an end.

SIR ROBERT PEEL derived great consolation from the declaration of the hon. gentleman, that if he would adopt a 9s. 4d. duty, instead of an 8s., he would remove all the apprehensions of the agricultural body, as far as meat was concerned. He could not have been far from the mark, therefore, as to meat. If live cattle only weighed four cwt., after deducting the two-fifths, the hon. gentleman's proposal would only raise the duty 2s., and although of course the duty would be higher for heavier cattle, he would tell the hon. gentleman why he could not consent to his proposal. He thought that the duty he proposed upon meat and cattle was ample and sufficient. He thought that if lean cattle had a free admission, the agricultural body would derive a great advantage. As far as lean cattle was concerned, the duty of £1 was sufficient, and the agriculturists would have a right to complain if he flung upon them only fat instead of lean beasts. The hon. gentleman's duty would discountenance the importation of the heavier sorts of lean beasts, which afforded the least profit to the farmers. With respect to fat beasts it was not the amount of duty but the distance, the small area from which a supply could be obtained, and the difficulty of transport to this country that was the real protection. He hoped, therefore, that his hon. friend would not think it disrespectful to his opinion if he adhered to his own proposal.

In reply to Mr. Pusey, who suggested the appointment of a select committee.—

Sir Robert Peel said, that it was admitted by his hon. friend the member for Somersetshire that it was very difficult to determine the exact amount of protection which should be given between live and dead cattle, he therefore fixed upon one sum of 5s. 6d. for pigs, sheep, oxen, and cows; and if so great a judge found it difficult to say what the amount of protection should be, he did not believe that a committee of the most consummate graziers could come to any definite conclusion on the subject. It appeared to him that it was for the House to decide for itself upon the matter of its general judgment. If he yielded to the suggestion of his hon. friend, he should be equally obliged to give way to parties interested in other articles. Why not, for instance, have a select committee upon the subject of the proposed reduction of duty on spermaceti oil? or upon the subject of the proposed reduction of duty on seed, to see that the duty on one seed was just equivalent to that on another? The House ought to consider first whether it was fit that prohibition should be removed, and if they were satisfied, then, from their general information and judgment, they should impose such a duty as would do justice to the producer and to the consumer; if they attempted a more definite plan they would fail. By consenting to the present motion he would be involved in endless difficulty and delay, and his hopes of a speedy progress with the tariff would be disappointed, because he must consent to committees on many other of the 1,100 articles in the tariff.

Mr. Villiers followed, and moved that the blank in the resolution, which it was proposed should be filled up with twenty shillings, be filled up with one shilling.

Sir R. Peel: The course the noble lord intends to pursue, almost induces me to refrain from making any statement with regard to the particular province of Russia to which the noble lord has alluded. The noble lord charges us with having increased the apprehensions, and added to the alarm which already prevailed in the country, by stating the immense amount of corn that would be imported from a province of Russia into our markets. Just let me remind the noble lord and the committee of the real facts of the case. The noble lord, or the late government, appoints as a commercial agent at St. Petersburg a gentleman well able to afford commercial information to this country. The late government volunteered to get correct information as to the extent of the supply of corn that could be derived from foreign countries. Their consul, appointed on account of his commercial qualifications, informs the government that 38,000,000 of quarters of wheat—he begged pardon—of corn, could be brought from a certain province of Russia. Her Majesty's late government were then intent upon an alteration of the Corn-laws; and though, of course, they had read that information, still they had never thought it worth their while to inquire of their informant—this commercial agent—upon what basis this piece of information was founded. They never put that question, but they had printed for the information and instruction of parliament and the country the statements they had derived from such a high authority on the subject of the capabilities of Russia as their commercial agent or consul. This information was in their possession for several months, and yet he was the first person to say, that it was a most astounding statement; and accordingly he asked if there was not an error on the very face of it. On reference to the original despatch, it was founded, that the 38,000,000 quarters of corn appeared, not in figures, but at length, in the handwriting of the consul himself. And there it remained, without any attempt on the late government to clear up the manifestly apparent mistake; and then the noble lord charges us with continuing this mistake, which originated with, and was derived from their information. Now, he must be permitted to say, that the noble lord was more responsible for those exaggerated apprehensions of which the noble lord spoke, for the printing and circulating this information at the expense of the country, until he and the government with which the noble lord was connected found out the mistake, and then, when it was pointed out, they wrote to their consul to ask if his information was correct.

The committee divided, on the question that the blank be filled up with the words "One Shilling."—Ayes, 44; Noes, 209; majority, 165.

On the main question being again put,—Major Vivian moved, "That the duty on cattle, meat, and other provisions mentioned in the tariff, imported from the Canadas, be equal to the import duties from other foreign countries."

Sir R. Peel doubted whether the hon. gentleman had been happy in the article on which he had thought fit to bring forward this question; for it was on the question of the duty on oxen that the committee were then deliberating, and he did not conceive that there could possibly be any danger of importation of oxen from the banks of the Mississippi. The same, of course, with respect to fresh meat. To be sure, he had seen a haunch of venison brought from that country, but it was not quite in a state in which he should have liked to venture upon it. He did not think that it was necessary to go into the principle of the hon. gentleman's proposed alteration. The House had discussed the principle very fully a short time ago; they had allowed this boon to Guernsey and Jersey, and he did not see why they should not allow it to the Canadas; for he did not see any great ground of apprehension that there would be any such influx of meat from that country as the hon. gentleman seemed to apprehend. The hon. gentleman, however, said there would be no boon to the Canadas, because, he said, they had no cattle there at present; but if cattle could be fed there so as to be converted into salt meat for exportation to this country, then, he thought, that would be a benefit to Canada. It would be a benefit to the colonist, and to a certain extent to the consumer also; but he did not think that the effect with respect to the quantity likely to be imported would be such as need give rise to any apprehensions. Therefore he trusted that the House would feel, that it was not wise to accede to the proposition of the hon. gentleman, whose object, as he

apprehended, was, to raise the amount of duty on all these articles of stock imported from the colonies to the same height as if they came from foreign countries.

In reply to some remarks by Mr. C. Buller and Viscount Howick—

Sir R. Peel remarked, that where there existed such differences of opinion, it was extremely difficult to form an opinion of what would be the real operation of the tariff. He believed the noble lord would admit, that spring corn, and not wheat, was chiefly used in the feeding of cattle. He had been in the first instance told, that the protection given to spring corn was disproportioned to that which was given to wheat; but the argument of the noble lord went to show, that it would be more beneficial to the agricultural interest if less protection were given to spring corn. It now appeared that he had been wise in giving that less amount of protection to spring corn, and he hoped that this would be treasured up by those agriculturists who dealt in spring corn. According to the argument made by his hon. friend, the member for East Somerset, the other night, he ought to say to the members for Norfolk and Suffolk, "Don't be at all afraid of the importation of barley and oats, for the hon. member for Somerset says, they will only come in in the shape of fat cattle and pigs." But how did the trade with Ireland confirm that argument of the hon. member for Somerset? Not at all; for it appeared, on the contrary, that this economical mode of importing barley and oats in the shape of fat cattle had not taken effect. Simultaneously with the importation of the largest quantity of fat cattle from that country there had been the importation of the largest quantity of oats.

Major Vivian ultimately withdrew his motion; the blank for the duty on colonial cattle was ordered to be filled up with "ten shillings," and the remaining items were agreed to.

The House then proceeded to consider the articles of fish, fruit, &c., a number of items were agreed to, and the House resumed, Committee to sit again.

### INCOME-TAX—THIRD READING.

MAY 30, 1842.

SIR ROBERT PEELE moved the third reading of the Property-tax bill, when Mr. Sharman Crawford moved as an amendment a resolution, having for its object a more full and fair representation of the people.

Sir Robert Peel trusted, that the hon. member would not charge him with any want of respect if he declined to enter into the discussion of this motion, which the hon. member's speech, however, held out every inducement to do. He thought that much more favourable occasions could have been adopted for proceeding with a proposition for a change in our representative system. The hon. gentleman, on his former motion on this subject, stated very strong opinions that that House did not represent the feelings of the people, and that the whole system of representation was defective. The hon. gentleman's motion, which involved the main principle of his resolution of that night, had already been fully discussed. The proposition which was now made was even of a more extensive character than that made on a former occasion, for the hon. member now declared that the House of Commons, as at present constituted, was incapable of performing its functions, and that the only step they ought to take was immediately to resolve upon an extensive reform in the representation. If the House was not at liberty to impose an Income-tax, they were hardly competent to reform the tariff, and were not capable of performing any of the constitutional functions which had been assigned to it. If the House was unfit to impose this measure, there was no other act which they could justly perform. He was very much afraid that the hon. gentleman's motion would go to the extent of declaring, that the House could not even reform itself. In short, all the functions of legislation must be stopped until this reform took place. He thought that this would be most unwise in the present state of the country. He had already stated the substantive objections he entertained to the proposition on a previous occasion, and he would not then repeat them. He thought also, that it would be most inexpedient to discuss the question of parliamentary reform on a motion for the third reading of the Income-tax bill. He trusted that the hon. member would not think

that his abstaining to say any more on the present occasion arose from any want of respect.

Amendment negatived. Question again put that the bill be read a third time, Mr. F. T. Baring rose, and was proceeding to bring forward an amendment, when Sir R. Peel, who had just previously been called out of the House by Sir J. Graham, rose, amidst loud cries of "hear," and addressed the House in the following words, at least as nearly as we could collect them, for the right hon. baronet's excitement well nigh overpowered his utterance:—Whatever may be the inconvenience to the public service resulting from delay, yet still I think it would be inconsistent with my duty, with my position, and I feel certain that it would be unsatisfactory to the House, were I not, after what I have just heard, to propose that the consideration of the question now before us be postponed. I ought to premise, that the information I have received is so imperfect that I must repeat it with great distrust as to the entire accuracy of it; but, since I came into the House, information has reached me that an attempt has been made on her majesty's life—an attempt which a merciful Providence has rendered abortive; and I have reason to believe, that the assassin is now in custody; and he will, consequently, at as early a period as possible, be subjected to an examination. Under these circumstances—[Mr. C. Wood: Is the Queen quite safe?] Perfectly so. I would, under these circumstances, suggest that we do now adjourn, and if this proposal be agreed to, the debate can be renewed to-morrow. My noble friend the member for Dorsetshire, has received a pledge of precedence for his motion to-morrow at five o'clock, but immediately after that is disposed of, the right hon. gentleman's amendments can be taken. At present I do not think that, our feelings being naturally all so excited, we could pay proper attention to the subject; and I therefore would suggest that, not only out of respect to our Sovereign, but from our inability, under the circumstances, to pay the requisite attention to the question before us, it will be better to postpone the debate, and I therefore move, that the House do now adjourn.

Lord John Russell briefly seconded the motion, and the House adjourned.

On the next day the bill was read a third time and passed.

## SUGAR DUTIES.

JUNE 3, 1842.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer moved, "That towards raising the supply granted to her Majesty, the several duties on sugar and molasses now payable shall be further continued."

Mr. Labouchere moved as an amendment, "That the duty on foreign sugar be reduced to 30s. per cwt., and on colonial sugar to 20s. per cwt."

In the course of the long discussion which ensued—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said it was quite evident that, if this debate were permitted to proceed, there would be, on the other side of the House, a considerable degree of heat and asperity, quite inconsistent with the calmness of deliberation. He thought it was his duty to prevent that by rising to counsel moderation in the combined phalanx of his opponents, and pour oil on the troubled waters. He hoped the House would come to this practical conclusion, that by far the safest course they could pursue would be to vote for the proposition of her Majesty's government, and leave the question in the hands in which it ought to be. It was perfectly evident, that to adopt any rival proposition would produce no satisfaction whatever. He did not speak against, but he voted against the motion of the hon. member for Bath, for he felt that calm reason was scarcely necessary to discuss the principles it embodied. The hon. member for Montrose announced his wish to maintain our colonial dependencies, but said, that his object was to see each colony paying for itself. He apprehended that the proposal of the hon. and learned member for Bath to admit these colonies to an unlimited competition with slave possessing colonies, was not the way to ensure that object. The hon. member said, that if the weavers of Lancashire were asked what benefit they derived from the duty on foreign sugar, they would assuredly say, "None." But he put it to the hon. member, whether that

was the test by which any great question affecting the country was to be decided? If he asked a Lancashire weaver what benefit he derived from Jamaica, and that his reply was "None," ought that to induce him to abandon Jamaica? Was the hon. gentleman prepared to test the advantages derived from our connection with India in the same manner? Or, should we abandon our colonial dependencies altogether upon the assurance of a distressed weaver of Lancashire, that he was not aware that any benefit was conferred upon this country by those dependencies? If that were the principle of the hon. and learned gentleman, it was quite clear, that in order to conform to it, we must resolve our power into the narrow limits of our own resources, and try what England could do against the world, after having abandoned all those dependencies which she had established to her glory. It was not merely a material or pecuniary benefit that was to be regarded in the loss of our colonies. England was governed by higher considerations, and could never be guilty of such ingratitude, such a breach of faith, as to forsake those dependencies that she had fostered and protected. He asked whether the government was not entitled to demand the confidence of the House upon the subject. The proposal was, that the existing duties should continue for one year longer. He was referring to the annual vote upon the sugar duties, which did not prevent, but compelled the consideration of the question in another year. The question, then, upon which the sense of the House would be taken was, whether or not the sugar duties should continue for another year? He asked, whether the government had taken a course respecting the commercial tariff of the country which disentitled it to the support and confidence of the House. It was said, that all minor interests were sacrificed, but that where any great political interest intervened, there was deference and submission. He did not think that the government was fairly chargeable with such partiality. Much had been said about the West-India interest, and it was said that the government supported a monopoly out of deference to it, but certainly nothing could equal the folly of a government that could act improperly and unjustly for the purpose of conciliating the support of the West-Indian interest. In the unreformed parliament the West-Indian interest may have been powerful, but the Reform bill struck a great blow at that interest; and he believed that, in point of political influence, no interest at the present moment was weaker than that of the West Indies. The noble lord had spoken of the tariff as if the consumer in this country would derive no advantage from it. The noble lord said, that it did nothing material with respect to meat. He would only remind the noble lord, that he had been ten years in office, and had never proposed any alteration in the tariff. The noble lord did bring forward a sort of 8s. duty on corn; but during the whole ten years that he remained in office, did he ever intimate his intention of reducing the duty on foreign cattle or provisions? In reference to the measure which he had introduced, he knew that the apprehensions entertained regarding it were greatly exaggerated; but he had held no equivocal language on the subject. The price of meat was high; but he had always said that there were physical difficulties which constituted a protection to the meat of this country, and which would prevent any great reduction in its price. When he heard that the apprehensions were so great, that the price of cattle had fallen 25 per cent., he thought it was time to interfere. He adverted to this, because the noble lord had talked of his fearing to offend a powerful interest, and he wished to contrast the course which he had pursued with that of the late government—a course in which he ran greater risk than any minister ever ran, and he saw that nearly a hundred of those members who had given him their confidence were on this particular point prepared to vote against him, and he thought that in adhering to his resolution he had given sufficient proof that he was prepared to incur the risk for the purpose of benefiting the people. He contrasted that course with the one pursued by the noble lord. The noble lord might say, that he had great reforms in contemplation. But when the noble lord brought forward his proposal for a fixed duty in corn, there was not a whisper of any reduction of the duties on the other articles of provisions. The noble lord now produced a proposition in reference to the sugar duties different from that produced last year, and the noble lord surely would not blame those who attacked and negatived that proposition which now appeared not to be a perfect Minerva, sprung at once from the brain of Jupiter. The present proposition of the noble lord would cause a loss to the re-

venue of from £500,000 to £600,000. The hon. member for Weymouth seemed to think that a reduction of  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the price of sugar, would be a small matter; but if they argued against a reduction because it was small, they would never have any reduction in the tariff. But viewing the matter abstractedly, these small savings constituted great savings on the whole. Each small saving would tell upon another small saving, and therefore they would propagate themselves. The right hon. gentleman said, that they ought to take off this tax, because it was a burden on the people. If they took that as a principle, he would venture to say that there would be a deficit even with the Income-tax, of £2,000,000. He had no doubt, if he were asked the question, whether he would think it right to reduce the duty on wool, if he looked at the question abstractedly, he would say that he did. If he were asked the same question as to the duty on cotton wool, he would probably give the same answer. If they raised a duty of £600,000 from sugar, which they ought to sacrifice, they would lose £800,000 on wool and cotton wool. If he took the excise duty on glass, he would venture to say, that there was not one article the reduction of duty on which would confer such great benefit on the people. So of every duty, if he looked at it simply and abstractedly, he must give way to the arguments for a reduction. But in the present instance, and with the uncertainty as to the produce of the Income-tax, he could not agree to the loss of £600,000 in the revenue, to reduce the price of sugar  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. a pound, although he admitted that the benefit of the reduction would be considerable. With respect to the West Indies, particularly, he thought, that no steps ought to be taken without considering attentively the state of the interests of the West Indies, and seeing how far they were affected by our fiscal regulations. He had grave doubts whether our West India colonies, in which we had suppressed slavery altogether, could compete with colonies in which slavery did exist. That was the opinion of Mr. Deacon Hume, who was for carrying the principles of free-trade as far as any man. Mr. Hume was of opinion that the principle of free-trade did not apply to this case. "I cannot conceive," said Mr. Hume, "that having thirty years ago abolished the slave-trade, and having now abolished slavery itself, that any question of free-trade can arise between Jamaica and Cuba. Cuba, with an abundance of fresh and rich soil, not only having the advantage of employing slaves—whatever it may be—but notoriously importing the enormous amount of 40,000 or 50,000 slaves every year, having, in fact, the slave-trade and slavery; and as the laws of this country deprive the planter of Jamaica of that means of raising his produce, I consider the question as one taken out of the category of free-trade."

Such was the evidence of Mr. D. Hume, given before the Import Duties' committee. What, however, was the present state of the trade? In the year 1840, the average price of sugar was 49s. 1d. per cwt. In 1841, the average price was 39s. 7d.; and in 1842, the average price was 38s. 2d. And what had been the price during the last month? 37s. 3d. Observe, there had been a continued reduction in the price of sugar. Then as to the consumption. Last year, notwithstanding the distress of the country, there had been the greatest consumption that had been ever known, not greater in reference to the population, but greater altogether. There were more than 4,000,000 cwt. of sugar consumed in this country last year. But the main ground on which he opposed the motion of the right hon. gentleman was the same on which he opposed the motion of last year. He did not believe that the honour and character of this country would be maintained if they were to make a reduction in the duty on foreign sugar, without making any attempt to obtain an equivalent concession from the growers of that sugar. They were in a peculiar situation at the present moment as to slavery and the slave-trade. Their efforts on the coast of Africa had unfortunately failed, so far, at least, as the expedition of the two vessels sent out last year was concerned. They had been told last year, "You may relax the duties on foreign sugar, in the expectation of other and more efficient means of putting an end to slavery." What were their hopes now? What was the state of our relations with that great country, France, which had recently refused to ratify a treaty signed with its own consent? Imputations had been thrown out against France upon this point, and we ought not lightly to take any step to abate the confidence of the world in our disinterested motives. If, then, there were proof that last year the consumption of sugar was greater than in any preced-



ing years, if for the purpose of mere pecuniary benefit, and after the sacrifices they had made, they now permitted the negroes of the Brazils and of Cuba to come into this country without making an attempt to put down the slave-trade and slavery, their motives would not be attributed to that high principle which was now ascribed to them. He would say, make the attempt with those countries from which the supply was to be obtained. The sugar-growing countries were themselves in a peculiar situation at the present moment. There was a growing feeling that the continuance of slavery was attended with great danger. In Cuba, in the American States, and in the Brazils, there was a great ferment in the public mind, not merely as to the slavery, but also as to the slave trade; some from benevolent motives, but some from interested fears. Let them look at the great example they had set, and let them see what must be the inference which would be drawn from their conduct. The example we had set as to the slavery trade had produced its effects. It was impossible that there should be this feeling existing in the North and South American States without seeing that slavery itself stood in a very precarious position. The same feeling had grown up in the Brazils, and the same feeling was now spreading in Cuba. He held in his hand a letter from a naval officer of Cuba, dated 6th April, 1842, in which he said that he could not hear of any vessels fitting out at the Havannah for the slave-trade; he understood that there was great anxiety as to the probability of a general emancipation, in which case it was evident that the greater the number of slaves imported, the more embarrassment there would be when the time came for the emancipation. That was the feeling in Cuba, and if the inhabitants of Cuba entertained such a feeling, was it not likely to prevail in the Brazils; and if it prevailed in the Brazils, was it not likely to prevail among the intelligent community of the United States? He said then that they ought to be doubly cautious how they acted. The right hon. gentleman said that if we made this relaxation, we should be able to speak to other countries with greater authority: that is, if they admitted Brazilian sugar at a duty of 30s. instead of 63s., we should be able to speak with greater authority to other countries. What? after encouraging the embarking of great capital, did the right hon. gentleman—as was well put by his right hon. friend the vice-president of the board of trade in his very able speech,—did the right hon. gentleman think that in three years from the change we should be able to speak with greater authority to the sugar-growing or slave-holding countries? Did the right hon. gentleman himself pursue that course with respect to taxes? Was it not his boast that they would not enter into a treaty without a stipulation as to the suppression of the slave-trade, and the legalization of a right of search? Texas wished to have a treaty of commerce, and we said, “We will not enter into treaty with you unless you will abolish the slave-trade,” and as a guarantee of their sincerity they assented to the right of search. The right hon. gentleman did not establish his commercial relations by treaty in the first instance, and then ask them to assent to the right of search; no,—he said, “We are ready to enter into the treaty, but we exact as a condition that you should assent to the right of search.” [Mr. Labouchere: That was a new country.] No doubt it was a new country; but the principle was the same, and if the principle were good let it be generally applied. The right hon. gentleman said, “let this country take the advantages of our commercial relations, and you will be able to prove to Texas, that unless she gives the right of search these advantages will be lost. Now with respect to France, did the right hon. gentleman conduct his negotiations with that country upon the principles which he now advocated? Did he say to France, “We will reduce the duties on wine and brandy, and then we shall feel ourselves entitled to reductions of duties on our manufactures?” He had not taken that course, but he had said, “You have concessions to make which are of great importance to our manufactures; we have concessions to make of great importance to you in respect of your cultivation of the vine; we insist upon it that these reciprocal concessions shall be simultaneously made.” And if the right hon. gentleman took that course with regard to Texas and France, did not the right hon. gentleman think that he should be better able to negotiate with slave-holding parties, and attach conditions favourable to abolition of the slave-trade, to concessions of duty on foreign sugar? The noble lord had repeated the argument which had been used last year; that if tobacco and cotton were allowed to come in, sugar also ought to be permitted to be imported. Sugar

was a new concession; but surely the noble lord would not deny that there was something in the cultivation of sugar which took it entirely out of the same category with those other articles to which he had referred. He had been very much struck with the opinion expressed by Sir Lionel Smith in reference to the introduction of labour into the Mauritius. Sir Lionel Smith said, that he was charged with a want of sympathy for those engaged in the cultivation of the sugar cane; but he declared that he had seen too much of the consequences entailed upon those engaged in that labour to view its cultivation with any thing but horror. There was something, therefore, in the cultivation of the sugar-plant peculiarly destructive to human life, and he thought that to open the market of this country at the present time, to allow the introduction of the produce of the sugar-growers of Cuba and Brazil, without any stipulation for the advantage of the negro, would be to detract from the character of this country, and to lower it in the estimation of foreign nations. There were parties in all these countries, and contests were going on between them. There were parties in favour of slavery, and parties averse to it. Should we then show a desire to foster the present practice of slavery? Should we do any thing to raise a presumption that our motives had not been disinterested? Should we do any thing to excite a belief that in voting the sum of £20,000,000 for extinguishing the curse of our colonial system, we had been actuated by any other than just principles and disinterested feelings, or should we allow it to be said, that we were now actuated by no higher views than the procurement of a relaxation of these duties? His own opinion was, that if the proposition of the right hon. gentleman were adopted, the present influence of this country would be materially abated, and that we should be unable to make any continued exertions in favour of any progress in this great cause—exertions on which the final abandonment of the slave-trade, and the extinction of slavery itself most materially depended.

The original motion was agreed to, and the House adjourned.

## BRIBERY AT ELECTIONS.

JUNE 6, 1842.

In the discussion on Lord John Russell's motion for leave to bring in a bill for the better discovery of bribery, at the election of members of parliament.

SIR R. PEEL said: Sir, I shall give my cordial support to the motion of the noble lord for leave to bring in a bill, to prevent the practice of bribery, and to facilitate the exposure of that offence after it has been committed. It appears to me, that there are three defects in the present law with respect to the examination of witnesses. The first is the case in which an election committee is appointed at the instance of an individual, for the purpose of determining an individual right. In that case the individual having no other object than to maintain his own personal right, when the enforcement of that right becomes desperate, or the expense of maintaining it is likely to be so considerable, that his private fortune would be injured, he has every motive for withdrawing from the contest. That consideration leads to compromises, several alleged instances of which we have heard of in the course of the present session. Now, I do think there ought to be a remedy for this, and that a committee having been appointed for the adjudication of an individual right, that committee ought to have the power, and ought to be compelled as a duty, to report to the House that the inquiry had been broken off on account of circumstances which the committee might set forth, and that it considered the public interest required that the inquiry should be conducted at the public charge. I apprehend that the noble lord's measure will have for its object the providing an effective remedy for this defect. There may be cases, too, in which electors, though aware of bribery and corruption having taken place, fear to call for a parliamentary inquiry into the matter, in consequence of the expense; and in such cases no committee would be appointed, whatever the state of the case, and there would be consequently, a great impediment in the way of justice. I am prepared to support a measure which should facilitate inquiries into such cases as these. I do not wish to transfer the onus of trying questions of individual right from individuals to the public, where such

inquiries would otherwise be made in the same way as at present ; but where, from some such circumstances as those which I have pointed out, the inquiry which the public interest demands would not otherwise be made, it would be highly desirable that the public should institute the inquiry, and that electors should have due protection in such inquiries. In cases where such an examination should be instituted, and it should be found that the sitting members were unduly returned, I should suggest that where the opposing candidates, by the determination of the committee, were shown to have had the majority of *bona fide* votes, that the seat should not be, as was proposed, declared void ; but that the opposing candidates, so placed in a majority, should, as in the rule already observed, be declared the sitting members. I think it of great importance that members in affording facilities for candidates, who have not succeeded to petition, should take care not to transfer the onus of prosecuting an individual right from the individual to the public. When the public interest is involved in the question—when, for instance, the question arises, whether a borough should be disfranchised, or some public example should be made on account of bribery—in a case like this, it is quite right that the public should take charge of conducting the inquiry, and bear the expense of it ; but, then, you must be careful, that by being too ready to transfer the expense to the public, you do not altogether do away with the inducement to the individual to prosecute his own rights. I do not say the public have no concern in the question as to who shall have the seat. What I say is, that if, without due precaution, you promote petitions to be prosecuted at the public expense, the effect will be that unsuccessful candidates may incite electors in their interest to present petitions in cases when such petitions would otherwise never be heard of. The opportunities or temptations thus presented for attempting to get a seat in the House through the means of election petitions would be a serious evil, and I hope the noble lord provides for it.

Lord J. Russell was understood to say, that when the petition was prosecuted at the public expense, and the sitting member unseated, the election should be declared void.

Sir R. Peel : In that case there certainly would not be so much temptation. But then, if it appeared clearly by the result of this inquiry that a majority of the electors was in favour of the unsuccessful candidate, would you in that case, make a new election necessary ? Suppose it be proved to your satisfaction that a certain individual ought to have been elected, would it be just to make the election void, and have recourse to a new election ? I do not understand, exactly, how the noble lord means to deal with such a case. With the principle of his motion I cordially concur—and I trust he will see that it is in no unfriendly spirit I throw out this remark. It is of the greatest importance that you should not lightly promote petitions at the public expense, relieving candidates from the charge attending the prosecution of their individual right. There is one other consideration with respect to this branch of the subject. You ought not to subject members honestly and fairly returned, to annoyance and vexation, on account of the facility given to the prosecution of petitions. You ought not to subject a member, who has firmly refused to participate in bribery, and who has obtained his seat through perfectly honest means—you ought not, indeed it would be manifestly unjust, to subject this man to the annoyance and expense of defending his seat. At present you subject the party prosecuting the petition to enter into recognizances. But if you provide that, on a petition against the return of a member merely signed by a certain number of electors, it shall be proceeded with at the public expense ; that, no doubt will be very efficient in causing petitions to be presented when corruption has taken place ; but take care that you do not subject members honestly returned, to vexations to which an honest man will not submit. Now, you take a certain number of voters—you say six—as the number by whom the petition must be signed. Take the case of a member who has said he would not owe his election to bribery, and whose friends have done all in their power to prevent it. Yet we all know what a stimulus to the getting up petitions, the heats and animosities of elections are. [Lord J. Russell would require recognizances from the petitioning party.] I wish to be understood that I speak for honest men, who are honestly returned ; and if you wish members to be fairly returned to this House, you should not subject honest men to a prosecution which would operate as so great a discouragement against coming forward as candidates

as to deprive the House of the services of many who are most useful as members. I do hope, therefore, that, in facilitating petitions, you will not subject honest men to these discouragements. The other defect which I wish to allude to, is the difficulty, so far as the boroughs are concerned, of obtaining results satisfactory to parliament and the public. We appoint a committee of inquiry; the committee reports the existence of systematic bribery; the inquiry goes to the Lords, and is not proceeded with during that session. In the mean time, the feelings which led to the presentation of the petition have died away. The electors meet: they say, why should we proceed with this? Shall we not be charged by posterity with causing the disfranchisement of the borough? and is it not much better to withdraw the evidence from the House of Lords? Again, two or three most important witnesses examined before the committee of this House may be dead, or gone over sea, when the case is proceeded with by the Lords, so that the House may have a different evidence from this. I apprehend, therefore, that if the law be left as it is, the Lords will not in such a case be unwilling to concur in positive disfranchisement, except upon evidence heard at their own bar. I understand the noble lord means to provide a joint tribunal, consisting of members of both Houses, before which these inquiries should be entered on; and if the law be framed so that both the Lords and Commons, in a clear case, would be satisfied, the House of Lords, whose legislative power I understand the noble lord to leave in full force, would consent to the step of disfranchisement; I believe, that supposing the House consent to the measure, it would be better to leave to the Crown the nomination of the tribunal than to give it to parliament, as it appears more likely that the Crown, acting under the advice of responsible advisers, would make an appropriate selection; especially when it is considered that there may be differences in parliament from election reasons, and a committee constituted under such influences could hardly produce a good result. Though the course is somewhat novel, there is, I think, something analogous in East Indian jurisdiction, and on the whole, I think it would be better to leave to the Crown the appointment of a certain number of members. The noble lord's proposition I am perfectly satisfied with, and I believe it to be a great improvement on the bill of 1834, which was sent down from the Lords. It is much less cumbrous, and we have seen, Sir, by recent experience, the good effect of leaving nominations in certain cases to rest with the chair, under the guarantee of the character of the individual who occupies it, instead of referring them to majorities of the House. For these reasons, Sir, I approve of the noble lord's bill more than that of the House of Lords. With respect to the observations of an hon. gentleman opposite (the member for Montrose), as to the see-saw decisions of committees, though, by adopting a definite rule, you might avoid these see-saw decisions, I doubt much whether this is a principle by which questions of this kind ought to be decided. To the retrospective provisions of the noble lord's bill, I shall give my cordial support. With respect to Newcastle, for instance, I hope that it will be carried into effect, and that a clause will be contained in the bill, by which, though the noble lord's bill may not receive the royal assent these two months, any person taking money at the approaching elections, whether it be taken in the shape of "market-money," or in any other way, shall be liable to punishment. The law with respect to bribery and treating is certainly in an unsatisfactory state. I hardly know what the law relating to treating is now. It will be a difficult point to define between the mere innocent conviviality between friends and actual corrupt treating, when you come to apply penalties and declare what practices are corrupt. If you make a law making it corruption for a candidate to give a dinner to an elector, either before or after the election, this would prevent treating; but would it not, if possible, be still worse to trench so much on the liberty of the subject as to interfere in that way? Bribery, in the way of treating, exists, I think, to a very great extent. In the borough which I have the honour to represent, as I believe in every borough in the kingdom, the electors are in the habit of having a dinner. A number of wealthy individuals sit down; and I do think it hard that if two hundred gentlemen meet for this purpose, it being impossible that all the electors should sit down together, the rest of the constituency should be prevented meeting if they please and dining together. But here again, I fear, it must be admitted that though such dinners do not operate as bribery on the electors, they may do so on the publican.

Therefore it will be difficult in boroughs of a limited size and particular description to discriminate between hospitality and corrupt practices. There is another point to which attention should be called,—I mean the payments made for the conveyance of electors to the poll. It is very doubtful, at this moment, what is the law in respect to that point. Some committees of this House will say that it is legal to give reasonable refreshments to the electors, and I believe it has been decided that it is perfectly allowable on the part of a candidate to pay the expenses of the conveyance of electors to the polling places. [Dissent.] At least I am under the impression that election committees of this House have determined that a candidate might legally pay for reasonable refreshment for his voters, and for their conveyance to the place of polling. ["Mr. C. Wynn: No."] My right hon. friend may be right. But I never yet passed through a town in which there was a contested election, that I did not see a number of carriages always provided at the expense of the candidates for the conveyance of their voters. And if it be the case that electors will not take a sufficient interest in the exercise of the valuable privilege they possess, to induce them to come to the poll, unless they have the means provided them of doing so, I am very much afraid that any sudden and violent interference with the existing practice in that respect, will very materially diminish the number of voters. To say, therefore, that on no account shall the expenses of conveyance or reasonable refreshment be paid on the part of the candidates, would be, in my opinion, to make the number of electors voting at each election considerably less—thus practically diminishing the amount of the elective franchise. On the other hand, I am sensible that if it were made legal to pay such charges, the permission might be made a cloak to cover a far worse degree of corruption than now prevails, and which carried to excess, would be neither more nor less than the grossest bribery. Now, Sir, I think that the noble lord is perfectly right in proposing that every species of direct payment, as between the voter and the candidate, should be held as bribery; whether that payment be made under the name of "market-money," of "head-money," or of treating in general; be the amount 7s. 6d., to one class of electors, 10s. to another, or £1 to another. I am perfectly ready to support that proposition. But after this shall have been done I am afraid that we will leave the law on other points connected with the question, on treating for instance, and on various other classes of expenses, the same as we found it. In every borough there are certain individuals who take a lead in all political matters, and who altogether influence the electors in their respective places. Now, I believe that if these influential persons of both parties in boroughs set their faces against bribery, and came to an understanding to discourage all unnecessary expenses, they would do a great deal more towards the suppression of the evils complained of than all the acts of the legislature. These practices have prevailed so long that I do not expect a great deal could be done towards their suppression at once; and I consider that the extinction of them must be the effect of time and better habits. I do not wish to underrate the advantage of law in this respect. I believe that the noble lord has struck at the root of bribery in this bill; but, though the committees of this House have shown hitherto an almost total absence of party feeling and a fixed determination to put down bribery, I think at the same time that the exposure of the practices made necessary some preliminary proof. I do not, therefore, underrate the law, but I think that good example and improved habits will more effectually lead to the diminution of bribery—its extinction I scarcely look for—than any legislative enactment whatever, and I do hope that the leading men of the country will set their faces so effectually against it, that after the next general election, come when it may, there shall be little or no cause to complain on the score of bribery.

Leave given to bring in the bill.

## CUSTOMS ACTS—THE TARIFF—COALS.

JUNE 14, 1842.

The House in Committee on the Customs' Acts.

Mr. Gladstone proposed that the duty per ton upon coals, culm, and cinders, in

foreign ships, should be 4s.; in British ships, not small, 2s.; and on small coal or screened, 1s.

Viscount Howick proposed an amendment, negating the government proposition.

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, the prevailing feeling on my mind, in the course of this debate, has been one of unmixed satisfaction that I have secured the Income-tax; for what would have been the position of the government, since so great an opposition is made to this duty on coal, if we had proposed to raise three millions by taxes on articles of consumption? That was the alternative which the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) pointed to in his memorable resolution on the Income-tax, in which he tried to gather as many followers as possible under his banner. The noble lord stated, that up to the year 1836, twenty-three millions of taxes had been repealed, and if he did not directly say, "Levy some of those taxes again," the meaning of the reference was, that it would be much better to revive some of them than to have recourse to a direct Income-tax. Suppose I had been credulous on this subject. Suppose I had said I had better give up the Income-tax, and try my hand at the revival of taxes on consumption. Why, the tax on coal was one which was repealed, and certainly the opposition which has been shown to my raising £130,000 out of four millions by means of it, makes me rejoice that the Income-tax is beyond the grasp of that opposition. When I see the right hon. gentleman warmed to such a degree on this point, what would he have been if I had attempted to raise the amount of revenue indirectly? He says, that the proposition, as it at present stands, is infinitely better than the original one. If so, it cannot be bad. That which is not bad must be on the road to perfection. Here is a proposition supported by the coal trade, not universally, perhaps, but pretty generally. [Viscount Howick: A large body opposed it.] When a public meeting is called, and agrees that a duty of 1s. on small coal, and 2s. on other coal, is satisfactory to them, it may be taken as their meaning, that the proposition is not so bad, and they are ready to support it. It being desirable to supply a deficiency, and being in want of revenue, we make this proposition. Compare it with any other indirect taxation. The right hon. gentleman himself says, that our proposition is infinitely better than the other; and we have the consent of the parties interested. Then, as to the compromise which has been spoken of, and which I really thought the right hon. gentleman was going to refer to the committee of inquiry—so little was I aware of any compromise, that on Saturday I met my right hon. friends at the Board of Trade to consider the whole coal trade, to examine the information received from foreign consuls, from gas companies, and steam navigation companies, and I did not then understand that I was a party to any compromise. I thought myself then as free to propose any duty I might think fit as on the first day of the session. I did not know in what manner the parties to this resolution meant to vote, nor did I feel myself bound as to the course I should pursue. I can believe that the coal-owners might ask what progress the government had made in the tariff—that they would find that it had adhered to and carried all its propositions by large majorities—that they might ask if it adhered to the 4s. duty on coal, would that not be carried too? And they might state that they thought a 2s. duty might be accepted, as it would not check the export. I can believe that they would not imagine that the government would abandon the coal duty altogether; but would, on the 19th head of the tariff, adhere to its original proposition in the same manner as it had done in the eighteen others. It would be a great reflection on their understandings had I thought otherwise. I was no party to any compromise; but supposing I had been, we were acting for great interests; and were we to be deprived of the privilege of obtaining information? Has not the right hon. gentleman himself tried to ascertain what propositions would be palatable to certain parties? In the timber duties I entered into a compromise with the hon. member for Lambeth. I heard what the custom-officers could state; and I did infer, that if his proposition did not cause a loss of revenue, that it would not be met by violent opposition. Is this improper? There is no use in seeing deputations, if we cannot say to the parties making a new proposition, "How many of you agree in this? and if we accede to it, do you withdraw your opposition?" I saw the noble lord (Lord Howick) and the member for Southwark on this subject. Suppose they had said we think a 4s. duty too much, and that 2s. 6d. is enough. I should have asked what were the opinions of other parties. And he would have told me the

opinion of the trade. These negotiations are essential to settle taxes concerning commerce. What took place last night? The noble lord, the member for Liverpool, had given notice that he should move, that the duty on what is called naturalised coffee should be 6*d.*; we had consultations on the subject, and we did not accede to his proposal, and, without a single minute's notice, he altered his proposition to 7*d.*, only 1*d.* less than the duty on foreign coffee. It appears, that in the course of the debate, the noble lord (Lord Howick) went over to my noble friend, (Viscount Sandon,) and said, that he would vote for a duty of 7*d.*, but he could not vote for a duty of 6*d.* We never heard of this—the noble lord made a compromise in coffee but he would have no compromise on coals. When we determined on proposing a different duty on coal, I immediately came down to the House, and gave notice of it. The government would be subjected to nightly defeats, if members gave notice of one motion, and then confederated for the purpose of making another. All the negotiations on the coal duties were published in the Newcastle papers, all persons interested were consulted, and this is the concealment which it is said we have practised. I never made any compromise. Yesterday I was at liberty to make any proposition, and I can prove by written documents, that I did not know how my noble friend intended to vote. I now come to the question itself. We must never lose sight of the deficiency of revenue, and we have imposed a duty on an article which we think is fairly subject to it. It is an article not capable of reproduction; one which this country possesses in greater abundance than any other. I do not say that in order to suppress foreign manufacture, the export should be checked, but that having a great natural advantage in the possession of this article, do not let us lose the opportunity of raising some revenue from it. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Baring) has referred to the argument I used against his 5 per cent. duties, and he makes a confident prediction that this duty will greatly prevent the export of coals. I will tell him the reasons why I think it will not. The export of coals was, in the year 1836, 916,000 tons; and in 1838, it amounted to 1,313,300 tons. This is a strong indication that the article would bear a small duty, and I doubt whether a 2*s.* and 1*s.* duty will have any effect in reducing the exports. Every town on the continent is now, or about to be, lighted with coal gas, and the English coal is peculiarly adapted for that purpose. It was Mr. Warburton's opinion (and I suppose his opinion still has some weight in the House) that it was not expedient to export coal too freely; and Dr. Buckland participates in that opinion. This coal is peculiarly adapted for foreign manufactures, for lighting with gas, and for steam navigation. It is said that foreign countries will be indignant at our levying this duty. Our position is a peculiar one; we freely furnish foreign countries with our coal, and when they have it they extract as much revenue as possible from it. I will read to the House an account of the duties they levy on coals.

## THE IMPORT DUTY ON COALS INTO

|  | <i>s. d.</i> |                 | <i>s. d.</i>                   |
|--|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| France—Mediterranean ports and<br>to Oleron, |              | Other countries | 11 8                           |
| French Vessels                               | 2 6          | United States   | 6 8                            |
| Foreign                                      | 6 5          | Brazil          | 8 0                            |
| From Oleron to Dunkirk                       |              | Denmark         | 3 0                            |
| French vessels                               | 4 0          | Sweden          | 2 0                            |
| Foreign                                      | 8 0          | Prussia         | 3 0                            |
| Holland                                      | 6 10         | Hamburgh        | 1½ per cent. <i>ad valorem</i> |
| Belgium—From France                          | 1 9          | Russia          | Free                           |

I do not think then that ours is a very extravagant proposition, when it is considered that upon all exported coal foreign countries have the whole advantage, and take all the revenue. Every country feels the advantage to be so great, as not only to take the coal, but to levy a revenue on it. This is not an article of human industry, like silk—the supply is limited, and is it unreasonable that when other countries consider it a subject of revenue that we should partake in it? There may be coal mines in Belgium, but take a geological map of Germany and France, and compare the

carboniferous strata of France and England. There is not a single mine in the northern and western districts of France, and in the whole superficial surface only a two-hundredth part contains strata, while in England, one-twentieth does. In the south of France there are small coal mines, and great alarm has been experienced lest they should be worked; but even if they were, I should not think it a misfortune, for in the greater part of France the supply must be derived from this country. In Nantes, where there is a very heavy import duty, the whole of the coal which is consumed comes from this country. Supposing that an import duty of 8*s.* was levied in France, I do not think that country could be jealous of our laying a 2*s.* duty on the export. I cannot see the injustice or unreasonableness of such a proposition. With respect to there being a difference in the price charged in the small coal, purchased for domestic manufactures and for export, if you go to the coal pits you are asked the purpose for which it is required, and 2*s.* a ton more is charged for that which is used for domestic purposes. I will now read to the House a letter which I have recently received on this subject from a person engaged in the coal trade. ["Name, name."] I can assure hon. gentlemen that this is a *bona fide* letter; but I hope I shall not be called upon to subject the party to injury by a disclosure of his name. The right hon. baronet then read a letter to the following effect:—"I this morning received your letter, and I have no objection to these facts being made known. The coal-owners of Newcastle and Durham have refused to sell me small coals, except for exportation; and a short time since certain parties refused to send me 200 tons of small coals unless they were screened before shipping, it being alleged that it was contrary to their custom to do so."

There certainly are mysteries in the coal trade which I cannot pretend to develop, there is something in its regulations which I confess I cannot understand; but, certainly, there is a general impression among the manufacturers in this country that a higher price is demanded for small coals, if intended to be used for domestic manufactures than if intended for exportation, making full allowance for the increased labour in washing and screening them. I speak of coals of the same quality. Now it seems to me that that is a rather unfair disadvantage to which our manufacturers are subject. I cannot speak positively of the effect of this proposed export duty; but I think at all events that any regulations must be defective which would subject our domestic manufacturers to disadvantage as compared with foreign manufacturers. I will not trouble the House with minute calculations at this late hour. No duty can be imposed on any article without subjecting trade to some inconvenience; but I trust that under the peculiar difficulties of the present time, seeing the great financial exertion which the House has been called upon to make, recollecting that this is a duty which is levied by every foreign country, and bearing also in mind that our proposal is supported by a large majority of the coal owners, I hope the House will sanction our amended proposal, and not compel us to forego that financial supply which we hope to derive from a moderate duty on coals—a duty which we trust will not have the effect of injuring either the shipping or the commercial interests of this country.

The committee divided on the question that the proposed words and duty stand part of the schedule:—Ayes, 200; Noes, 67; majority 133. Proposition carried. Rest of the resolutions agreed to; and the tariff finally passed through committee.

## CAPTAIN WARNER'S INVENTION.

JUNE 21, 1842.

In reply to Sir Charles Napier, who wished to know what steps had been taken with regard to Captain Warner's invention,—

SIR ROBERT PEEL stated that he was very sorry the gallant commodore had brought forward this subject. Since the last mention of this subject three weeks ago, applications had been made by several individuals to have personal interviews with him on the subject of destructive inventions, which, they stated, were entitled to the utmost consideration on the part of the state. He did not wish to say any thing in disparagement of Captain Warner's invention, but he would give his own version of



his transactions with Captain Warner. Shortly after his appointment to office, he had a private opportunity of seeing the extraordinary effects produced by Captain Warner's invention, and he signified that he was willing in the regular authorised way to have experiments made with the discovery; that he thought, however, it rested either with the Admiralty or the Board of Ordnance to judge of the invention, for that he himself was wholly incompetent to form a judgment upon it; that he must remit to the heads of those departments the charge of instituting experiments of this kind. He, therefore, wrote to Sir George Murray, the Master-general of the Ordnance, to request him to name two officers to whom no possible exception could be taken—who had the most professional knowledge and the greatest practical skill in gunnery, and every thing respecting the destruction of human life. He had also stated, that thinking it unreasonable that Captain Warner should be put to any expense in the course of conducting the experiments, he would consent that the expense should be borne by the public. He asked, then, the House, whether or not, knowing the number of similar applications that had been made, and might be made, he could have taken any better course? The two gentlemen whom Sir George Murray had appointed for the purpose of making the experiments were Sir Howard Douglas and Sir T. Hastings, and he would appeal to any person conversant with those subjects whether more suitable parties could be selected? Captain Warner had certainly suggested that Lord Hardwicke or some other gentleman should be added, but he had objected to this as quite unnecessary. He certainly had not undertaken to pay any sum of money whatever beyond the expense of the experiment; what he said was, let the experiment be made, and we can then judge of the value of it. This was not an experiment, the real value of which could be tested in a small pool of water, and under prepared and advantageous circumstances; experiments must be made on a large scale and under adverse circumstances, so as to enable us to judge what would be the effect of the invention when wind and weather were against it. For the rest, if he were to give way to all the suggestions of all the persons who thought themselves in possession of a valuable discovery, in war, in finance, in commerce, in every possible branch of art and science, there would not be a guinea at the command of the treasury for any other purpose.

Subject dropped.

## WAR IN AFFGHANISTAN.

JUNE 23, 1842.

Mr. H. J. Baillie moved for "Copies of the correspondence of Sir Alexander Burnes with the Governor-general of India during his mission to Cabul in the years 1837 and 1838; also copies of the correspondence of the Governor-general of India with the President of the Board of Control, and with the secret committee of the East-India Company, from the 1st day of September, 1837, to the 1st day of October, 1839, relative to the expedition of Affghanistan."

A long debate ensued, towards the close of which—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, the question upon which the House is now called upon to decide is, whether, in the present circumstances of this country, and of our relations with Affghanistan and India, it is desirable that the papers for which the hon. gentleman has moved should be produced. I form my judgment on this subject solely with reference to the consideration of what is best for the public interests. I forget all party considerations, all political differences; and the single consideration which influences me is this—what in the present position of Indian affairs is the wisest course for this House to pursue? I come to the conclusion, that it will not, under present circumstances, promote the public interests to produce the papers for which the hon. gentleman has moved. As an illustration of my meaning, I will direct the attention of the House to our present relations with that great power whose conduct has excited considerable apprehension—I allude to Russia. Full explanations were demanded by her Majesty's late government with regard to certain transactions on the part of Russian agents, and those explanations were frankly afforded by the government of Russia. The papers containing those explanations have been

laid on the table of the House; and I may observe that, however suspicious may have been the conduct of Russian agents, and I admit that that conduct warranted some suspicion, and that it required explanation—there has been, on the part of the Russian government, a distinct disavowal of that conduct; one of the agents has been recalled, and a positive assurance has been given, on the part of the Emperor, that he has no wish to disturb British supremacy in India, and that he desires to maintain with us a good understanding with regard to the affairs of Persia. These sentiments, on the part of the Emperor of Russia, were conveyed to us by Count Nesselrode and Count Pozzo di Borgo. The noble lord opposite, in a letter, dated December 20, 1838, referring to the communications made by Count Nesselrode on the part of the Russian government said, that the despatch communicated by that nobleman expressed the desire of the Russian government to co-operate with the government of this country in reference to Persian affairs. The despatch contains the most full and complete assurance on this point; and the papers produced by the noble lord state, that her Majesty's government accept as entirely satisfactory, the declarations of the imperial government that it does not harbour any design hostile to the interests of Great Britain and Ireland. When the noble lord stated, that her Majesty's government accepted as satisfactory the declaration of the imperial cabinet, it must be inferred, that the noble lord placed confidence in that declaration. As far as I can bear testimony to the conduct of that great power, its acts have been in entire conformity with the declarations to which I have referred. No act has been done by Russia, with reference to her relations with Persia, and especially with reference to our relations with Afghanistan, since the reception of the recent disastrous accounts, which I have not every reason to believe is in strict and precise conformity with the declarations of her Majesty's government. Whatever may be the conduct of Russia, I believe that the governments of England and of India are sufficiently powerful to protect themselves. I do not think, that we are, as a nation, dependent on the co-operation and good faith of Russia or of any other power; but it is right to bear testimony to the facilities we have enjoyed in consequence of the good faith observed by Russia, and to declare publicly in the face of Europe, that it is impossible that any power could have acted with more strict good faith and more friendly feeling than have been evinced by Russia with reference to Persia and Afghanistan. A most cordial understanding subsists at this moment between the government of this country and the government of Russia. With reference to this subject, and founding my opinion on practical evidence, I will venture to say, that Russia is prepared to give proof of her good wishes, and of her desire to promote the maintenance of British supremacy in India. This being the case, can I reconcile it with the public interests to bring forward papers which might have reference to a different state of things? If there be such evidence of good faith—such proof of cordial good-will—would it be wise in us to disturb this good feeling by producing documents which might intimate the existence at a former period of a different state of things? I do not think, that in the present state of our relations with Afghanistan, the production of the papers for which the hon. gentleman has moved would promote the public interests; and, looking solely and singly to public interests, I must oppose the motion. The same principle upon which I have acted with regard to the production of these papers must also regulate my course with regard to this discussion. I stand in a position very different from that of the hon. gentleman who proposed this motion. I am an actor in these scenes, charged with great responsibility, and desirous to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion; and I think, as the representative of her Majesty's government in this House, that it would not be advisable to enter fully and unreservedly into a discussion on this question. What are the circumstances under which I should address the House? We are acquainted with the misfortunes which have befallen our troops at Ghuznee, but we are uncertain as to the fate of the garrison of that fort. We are also in a state of uncertainty as to the position of our troops in Candahar. Is this then a time at which a minister of the Crown can enter into a full and unreserved statement on these subjects? I may at the same time observe, avoiding all discussion as to matters on which caution is necessary, that I cannot entirely concur with the hon. gentleman in his views on Indian affairs. Whatever Lord Castlereagh may have said in 1820—whatever may have been the embarrassments of the finances

in India at former periods, which it has been able to recover, I cannot but think that the question of Indian finance is a subject of the utmost importance. Sir, I made no exaggerated statement with respect to India; I am afraid I said nothing more than is strictly borne out. I look at the last official account which has been made up, and which I believe rests on the highest authority; and I find that in 1835 the Indian government had a surplus revenue of £1,500,000, which was reduced in 1836 to £1,100,000; that was reduced to £650,000 in 1837 and 1838; to £238,000 in 1838 and 1839; and in 1839 and 1840 the change was from a surplus revenue to a deficit of £2,414,000; in 1840 and 1841 to a deficit of £2,824,000. The expense of the annual charge, including the interest of the debt, was in 1835, £15,766,000. I believe the hon. gentleman (Mr. Mangles) will find that the total charges, including the interest of the debt, in 1839 and 1840, amounted to £18,615,000, and in 1841 to £19,339,000. I am afraid that my right hon. friend will find, that that is the state of Indian finance; and, considering the importance of equalising the income with the expenditure in a state of general peace, recollecting that in India there is no Income-tax to resort to, and from what sources taxation must there be derived, how hardly it must press upon the cultivators of the soil, and what effect it must have on your hold of Indian opinion, I cannot help thinking, that Indian finance at the present time—whatever may be the case at other times—is a matter of the utmost interest. And when I see a gradual advance in expenditure from £15,700,000 to £19,300,000; and within the period of seven years a surplus of £1,500,000 converted into a deficit of £2,400,000, notwithstanding the strong views of the hon. gentleman, I still adhere to my opinion, that Indian finance is not in that satisfactory state he described. Now, with respect to the advance of our power in India, I don't understand the hon. gentleman's (Mr. Baillie's) argument. He speaks of the valour and success of our forces, at the same time he leaves the policy of our advancing untouched. The right hon. gentleman refers to the policy of hanging some persons. I don't understand the application of this circumstance to the subject under discussion. From the known humanity of my noble friend, I am certain that such rigorous examples were perfectly justifiable; but the bearing of that argument, and what it has to do with the policy of our advancing across the Indus I don't see. And with respect to the tendency of the Indian empire to extend itself, I am afraid there is much truth in the observation, that between civilised nations and nations very much their inferiors, there is a great tendency in the former to extend their empire in order to give security to what they possess. But still you cannot push that argument indefinitely; you must always inquire whether the policy of any war is advisable. I presume you cannot push that argument so far as to justify the expedition against Khiva, or the occupation of Bokhara. The policy of each particular war must always rest on its own special grounds; and the policy to which the right hon. gentleman refers won't vindicate the general principle of the universal extension of our dominion. On a former occasion, I deprecated the declaration of the hon. gentleman that he would not vote a single shilling to push the war in Afghanistan. I deprecated that as too hasty a decision. On the other hand, I don't wish to pledge myself that Lord Auckland's policy must be strictly adhered to—that must have reference to the experience we acquire in the intervening period, and on the change of circumstances that have occurred. I wish to give no opinion whatever. Considering the distance we are from that country, the uncertainty we labour under as to events, it is unwise to pledge ourselves to any particular course respecting the policy to be pursued in Afghanistan. I trust, that in any course that her Majesty's government may pursue, they will not forget to insure that the honour of the British arms shall be fully maintained, and that no instances of gross treachery and perjury shall pass altogether unpunished. With respect to this disaster—I will not conceal my opinion, it is a great military disaster; but we are strong enough to repair it. It is not a disaster to shake our dominion in India. It is impossible to see the examples of valour and fortitude which this disaster has called forth, and permit ourselves to despair. Is it possible to think of the persevering valour and endurance of Sir R. Sale, and I must say, to witness the heroism of that lady of whom we have heard so much, and to think of the effect of that example, and permit ourselves for one moment to be cast down and dispirited? Our reverses are great, but they are not worse than reverses we have met with before; and I have the greatest confidence in the

proved valour and fortitude of the British arms that these disasters will be so far repaired that they will not, in the slightest degree, shake the confidence of the people of England in our supremacy, in which I trust their confidence will never be shaken. As I said, I proposed to avoid the expression of any opinion; but I cannot but acquiesce in the fairness of the quotation which the hon. gentleman has made of my former statement. The right hon. gentleman, referring to my declaration on the Queen's Speech, in 1839, observed, that all I said on that occasion was, "I viewed the proceedings in India with great anxiety." I don't think any public man speaking on such a declaration—considering, of course, that subsequent events were quite unknown—ever showed more foreboding as to the consequences of the policy then pursued. I am afraid, I did not limit myself to expressions of anxiety. On this, the first intimation of the policy of Affghanistan, the words I made use of were—"He would next advert to a subject of far deeper interest, to a question which had for too long a time escaped the attention of that House—to the subject of the British empire, and the British interests in India. When they considered the immense importance of diverting the attention of the inhabitants of India from war, and of teaching them the arts of peace, and when they contemplated the evil consequences of a great financial expenditure, imposing the necessity for an additional taxation, he was bound to say, that he could not consider this question without the greatest anxiety."

That was on the policy of this war. I said, referring to part of the statement of the Governor-general, that—"The Governor-general confidently hopes that the Schah will be speedily replaced on his throne by his own subjects and adherents; and when once he shall be secured in power, and the independence and integrity of Affghanistan established, the British army will be withdrawn. Now, he should require that the fullest information should be laid before the House on this subject. Here was a sort of guarantee given by the Governor-general, that the British army would not be withdrawn until Schah Soojah-ool-Molk should be restored. That prince was deposed from his throne in 1809, and had been kept out of it ever since, though on one occasion he had endeavoured to recover his authority, at the head of an army of 20,000 men, and failed. Yet this was the prince whom the British government in India was about to restore by the aid of an immense and most expensive military force, and when restored, no doubt, another British force would be required to keep him on the throne. The principle was the same in the attempted restoration of the Schah Soojah as it would be in the attempt to restore Charles X. to the throne of France, with this difference, that the Schah had been thirty years dispossessed of his throne."

This was what I stated in 1839. I think I can hardly be charged with having expressed perfect satisfaction with the proceedings which had taken place. At least, I think that in 1839, before the events which have since occurred were known, I sufficiently showed, that I had great misgivings, not to say more, of what might be the event of the policy which was then under consideration. The right hon. gentleman says that, after giving notice of a motion on this subject, I abstained from pressing it; but I don't think that fact is quite conclusive against me, or that it justifies the right hon. gentleman in saying that I then approved of the policy of the late government in this matter. After you had decided finally on the course you would adopt—after you had determined to support Schah Soojah on the throne of Affghanistan, and after a considerable time had elapsed—and considering that this determination had been taken with respect to a policy to be pursued at a distance of so many thousand miles from this country—I think it will be apparent to every unprejudiced person that there might have been reasons for not pressing that motion which would not apply to the case of measures carrying on nearer home and under other circumstances. The right hon. gentleman says, also, that I seconded a vote of thanks from this House to Lord Keane. I certainly did second that motion; but nothing could be more distinct from approbation of the policy of the war than the terms I then used. The moment of success was not a time at which it would have been fitting to have gone into the question of that policy; but even in the moment of success I was careful not to say anything to imply our approbation of the military policy of the Indian government. Then, with respect to the present time, I quite admit that this is not the moment to make

positive expressions of opinion with respect to that policy. Even now, I have not expressed a more strong opinion than I expressed then. I should think that I violated my duty as a minister of the Crown if I had not at once stated to the House that, looking to considerations of public policy, and whilst a treaty is pending, I had determined not to produce the papers for which the hon. gentleman has moved. The same considerations of public policy also prevent me from entering upon the discussion of the general question, and oblige me to confine myself strictly to the limits which I have marked out.

The motion was negatived by a majority of 66.

## DISTRESS OF THE COUNTRY.

JULY 1, 1842.

On the Order of the Day being moved for going into Committee of Supply—Mr. Wallace moved a series of resolutions, relative to the very large amount of distress existing in the country.

SIR ROBERT PEELE said:—Sir, however various may be the opinions of gentlemen on different sides of the House, with respect to the commercial policy of the country—however various their opinions respecting the measures which ought to be adopted for the purpose of mitigating the distress which all of us admit to be too extensive—still I trust no gentleman present will feel inclined to give his vote without attending to the proposal which he is called upon to sanction by the motion of the hon. member for Greenock. Let me call the attention of the House to what the proposal is. In most of the first five paragraphs of the hon. member's motion, but more especially in that portion of them which relates to the patience and fortitude with which the people have borne their sufferings, I entirely concur; but then I come to the sixth paragraph, which contains a proposal to which the assent of the House is invited, and it is a proposal to which the House must, in my opinion, for the sake of its credit and character, give close attention before it decides. It is to this effect: "That an humble address be presented to her Majesty, praying that her Majesty will be graciously pleased to refuse her consent to the prorogation of parliament, until a diligent and searching inquiry shall be instituted into the causes of the unprecedented distress existing at present all over the kingdom, and thereafter until her Majesty and this House shall have been assured by her ministers that effectual means are secured to provide sustenance for the unemployed and their destitute families, until their sufferings shall be terminated by a demand for their industry and wages for their labour."

Now, Sir, what a shabby way is this of evading any discussion of the difficulties of the country! I am now speaking on the 1st of July, and up to this moment no notice has ever been placed upon the books for any inquiry into the distresses of the country. Even to night such an inquiry is not asked for; the House is only asked to concur in praying her Majesty not to consent to the prorogation of parliament until a searching inquiry shall have been instituted into the causes of the distress. Sir, if any such inquiry were desirable or necessary—if the hon. member for Greenock thinks that such an inquiry could be brought to any useful or practicable result—why has he not called the attention of the House to it long before this time? But you are called upon not to be contented with merely resisting any prorogation until this diligent and searching inquiry shall have been made. In what mode is this inquiry to be made? Are you to inquire by evidence at the bar into the causes of the distress? If into such a complicated inquiry the hon. member wishes to lead you, let me ask when would it be completed? How is it to be conducted? Or are we to have a select committee? We really know nothing of what are the intentions of the hon. gentleman; he has carefully evaded all explanation on these points, and the House is literally in the dark concerning them. But, even after the diligent and searching inquiry into the causes of the distress, you are to have no prorogation! You are to have no prorogation of the parliament until her Majesty and this House have been assured by her ministers that effectual means are secured to provide sustenance for the unemployed and their destitute families,—until their sufferings shall be terminated by a renewed demand for their industry and increased wages for their labour. We

are not called upon to create a demand for their industry by a revival of commerce; no, but to provide sustenance to all in distress for an indefinite period. Now, Sir, let me ask what does that mean? what is it but the motion of the hon. member for Knarborough in another shape? It is the very same in substance, and I should like much to know who will undertake to discover the remedy; and after all, her Majesty and this House is to be contented with the assurance from the government,—"Until her Majesty and this House shall have been assured by her ministers that effectual means are secured to provide sustenance," &c.

What government could undertake to give such an assurance? The hon. member clearly means that we are to provide sustenance for the people. Again let me ask whether that is not the motion of the hon. member for Knarborough, against which the hon. member for Greenock voted? Whatever may be the opinion of the House on the Corn-laws, I do hope it will never affirm such a proposition as to call upon her Majesty not to prorogue the parliament until a time which is left indefinite in the resolution. The hon. member has not shown that it would be either wise or prudent in the House, or consistent with its character, to encourage expectations which can never be realized; and, as I understand the hon. member for Whitehaven means to vote for the inquiry, I confess I am astonished that a gentleman of his knowledge and experience should sit in this House until this day, the 1st of July, without ever having mooted the question before, if he now thinks it of such importance. The hon. member is going to give his vote for the motion although he sat down, much to my surprise, without intimating any opinion as to the causes of the distress or suggesting any remedy. Surely a mercantile and intelligent gentleman like him is as able to see and judge of the causes and the remedy as her Majesty's government; he can form as correct a judgment upon them, and perhaps more so, than we can. Well, then, was it not surprising that he should sit down without offering one word to us or the House in the way of suggestion? [Mr. Attwood: I am not the doctor.] The hon. gentleman takes exactly my course—he is not responsible, and, therefore, he will not prescribe. I undertook the responsibility. I was called in, and her Majesty's government have taken the responsibility upon themselves, and with the utmost frankness we have proposed our remedies. All the hon. gentleman will do is to attend a consultation of doctors, but he will offer no opinion of his own. We have taken the responsibility upon ourselves, and we have proposed those measures which we thought best calculated to relieve the distresses of the country. The hon. member for Whitehaven thinks it absurd to expect any relief from a repeal of the Corn-laws; in that he is ready to give a decided opinion against the prescription offered by others. The hon. member thinks that we are wrong in relaxing the restrictions of commerce. Now, will he propose to increase the restrictions on trade? [Mr. Attwood: No.] The hon. gentleman will not alter the Corn-laws, and he is against any relaxation of the restrictions on trade, neither will he increase them; then, what are the remedies he would propose? Does the hon. gentleman consider that any commercial intercourse on the part of this country with foreign nations is desirable? I think the praise he has bestowed upon the policy of the United States clearly shows his opinion to be, that we ought to refuse to purchase from any foreign country articles which we can ourselves produce. How far will the hon. gentleman push these principles? If he pushes them to their full extent, he will annihilate all commerce. Commerce is merely the interchange of the productions of different countries, and if there be no interchange, commerce will cease to exist. It may be advisable to relax restrictions with caution; but, as I understand the principles of the hon. gentleman, he would push to its utmost extent the system of restriction on the import of all articles which we are ourselves capable of producing. That might be very well if the hon. gentleman could adopt securities against the illicit introduction of those articles; but the hon. gentleman would find that his attempt to encourage native production by a system of high duties would be defeated—he would find that the revenue would diminish, and that domestic industry would not be protected. I suppose the hon. gentleman would propose as a remedy for the existing evil, the abolition of that law which renders paper currency convertible into gold—a measure which he has advocated on former occasions. He disclaims the intention of advocating the re-issue of £1 notes, and I think it is clear, though he is not the doctor, that by exhausting his remedies he has placed himself

in this dilemma. He thinks that the repeal of the Corn-laws would aggravate the prevailing distress; he considers that her Majesty's government acts with great im- policy in proposing relaxations on commerce; he does not advocate the imposition of new commercial restrictions, he is not favourable to the re-issue of £1 notes, and I apprehend, therefore, that he has no other remedy to suggest than that termed in familiar language "the little shilling;" making 9d. or 10d. pass as a shilling, and relieving those who issue paper from the obligation to convert that paper into gold or the precious metals. I do not believe the hon. gentleman has any other remedy to propose than this. Indeed, I think I have shown pretty clearly that he can have no other remedy. I am surprised, considering the loudness of his tone, that he shrinks from suggesting his remedy, and that he shelters himself under the proposal for a committee of general inquiry into the distresses of the country. Let him go into that committee, let him there meet the advocates for the repeal of the Corn-laws, and if he fights his battle for the depreciated standard, I should like to know what time will be consumed before the committee arrive at any—not to say an unanimous—conclusion for the recommendation of a practical measure. I now come to the arguments of the noble lord (Lord J. Russell), who says that he is disposed to adopt a much less hostile tone towards the government than that of the hon. member for Whitehaven—a tone of hostility for which I can hardly account, considering that the hon. gentleman has supported the financial measures of the government, and did not offer any very vehement opposition to the tariff. The noble lord says that her Majesty's government have, in his opinion, attached too much importance to the financial difficulties of the country. The noble lord thinks we ought to have treated somewhat more lightly those difficulties and embarrassments; considering, however, that a deficiency of revenue had existed for five years, and that that deficiency at length amounted to £10,000,000; it might suit the noble lord to make light of the evil, but I apprehend the country did not come to the same conclusion. The noble lord says that the people have afforded a gratifying indication of their public spirit by cheerfully acceding to the proposal of an Income-tax. But why have the people shown this cheerful acquiescence? If it be wrong to propose an Income-tax in time of peace, what stronger indication of general confidence in a government could a people evince than by submitting to such a measure against their own conscientious impressions? Why, what must the people have thought of the late government, and what must be their opinion of the present government, if—through distrust in our administration, and confidence in the other—they are ready to acquiesce, against their own opinions, in the imposition of an Income-tax in time of peace? Could a stronger manifestation be afforded of universal confidence in a government? Is it not probable that the people came to the same conclusion with her Majesty's government, that the political circumstances of the country are such, that it becomes a matter of great public importance to equalize the national revenue with the expenditure—that delay and evasion are no longer practicable, and that, grievous as an Income-tax is, unusual as is the proposal of such a measure in time of peace, objectionable as is the inquisition which it establishes, yet so convinced are the people of this country that some vigorous and decisive steps are necessary that they willingly submitted to the impost; and I can tell the noble lord that there is a very prevalent impression that, upon my first proposal of an Income-tax, it was the intention of the members of her Majesty's late government to support the measure. That impression is very prevalent. I cannot know that it is true, but it is on no light authority that I state it. What circumstances induced her Majesty's late government to change the view they entertained on my first proposal of the measure I cannot, of course, understand. As her Majesty's late government abstained from intimating any intention of opposition when I first proposed this measure, as they said they would take time to consider it, the people may have been led to believe that—if the late government, who were intimately acquainted with the financial affairs of the country, thus acted—there must be some good and conclusive reason for the proposal of a measure which was met in the first instance by such faint indications of opposition. But, looking at the general position of this country, seeing that on the north-west frontier of India we were engaged in hostilities of doubtful issue, and subjecting the East India Company to great expense—that, at the same time, we were involved in a war with China, the duration of which it was difficult to calculate—seeing that our differences with America had continued

for several years, and that there was no prospect of their early adjustment—seeing that in another country, with which her Majesty's late government endeavoured to cultivate an intimate alliance, there had arisen feelings of jealousy and hostility much to be deprecated—combining, I say, these considerations, the people came to the conclusion, and in my opinion a most wise one, that it was desirable to make a great effort to equalize the revenue with the expenditure, and that in making that effort the burden should fall on the property of the country, not upon those who are chiefly occupied in its productive industry. My belief is, that it was not an extravagant degree of confidence in the government which led to the ready acquiescence in the proposal of an Income-tax, but a deep and conscientious conviction pervading the country that the time had arrived when a powerful effort must be made to put an end to the disorder in the finances. With respect to the tariff, the noble lord, by his admission, has gone far to convince me that her Majesty's government have pushed the principles on which the tariff is founded to as great an extent as is consistent with due protection to existing interests. The noble lord says, "You have reduced the duty on oil, on seeds, on ores, on timber; you have affected a great many interests; all I complain of is, that you have not carried your principles much farther." Now let us take the case of cattle. For a long period the complaint was urged, that the commercial intercourse of this country was restricted by the operation of the provision laws. It was said, "True, you admit corn under certain circumstances, but what course do you pursue with respect to cattle and meat? There is an absolute monopoly. Remove the restrictions, and the consequence will be a partial revival of commerce." Up to February, 1842, however, no government ever mentioned the article of cattle. The late government will say, no doubt, that they would have proposed an alteration with regard to cattle, for that such an alteration was consistent with their principles. I only know, however, that I never heard the restrictions on the import of foreign provisions mentioned in this House, except when charges were made against the government for not adopting some measure for their removal. I have proposed rates of duty which were scarcely objected to by hon. gentlemen opposite—namely, £1 per head on cattle, and 1*d.* per pound on meat. During the discussions on that subject, the noble lord, though he voted for my proposal, did not adopt a line of conduct calculated to smooth my course. He addressed himself, in plaintive tones, to hon. gentlemen on this side of the House, telling them they had good reason to complain of the deception I had practised upon them; and his speeches had rather a tendency to aggravate the panic which existed in the country, and which might have produced most lamentable results. The noble lord complained that no notice had been given of the alteration with respect to cattle, and stated that a great panic prevailed on the subject. He said, cases had come to his knowledge in which farmers had bought cattle, had fed them, and had then been compelled to sell them for less than the sum they originally cost. This circumstance shows that the interference with such interests is not unattended with practical evils. The panics consequent on such changes are frequently productive of considerable hardships to individuals; and the farmers who, in consequence of the panic in this case, parted—perhaps not very wisely—with their cattle, had, I admit, some reason for complaint. The noble lord says that, disregarding the panic, I had the firmness to adhere to my principles; I braved opposition; and I was eventually rewarded by finding that the panic was unfounded. But the noble lord states that the reduction of duties I proposed has effected no good. Does the noble lord think the same result would follow if his proposals were applied to corn? Now, I ask the House to judge of the position of the government. One class of gentlemen declare, that only one remedy can be effectual—the repeal of the Corn-law, and that nothing else will avail. The hon. member for Whitehaven, who is practically acquainted with commerce, says that the Corn-laws do not in the slightest degree occasion the present distress; he says that commercial prosperity has coexisted with the Corn-laws, and that it would be absurd to expect any relief from their repeal; he implies an opinion that all commercial relaxations are unwise, and I should have thought his principle was this—that additional protection should be at once afforded to domestic industry; and he says that the grand remedy for the prevailing distress is to be determined by a committee of inquiry, proposed to be appointed on the 1st of July. What, I would ask, has been the practical course her Majesty's government has pursued? We have reduced the



duties on corn one-half. At this moment wheat is admissible at a duty of 9s., and if the old law had been in existence the duty would, I believe, have been £1 : 3 : 8. This was a practical measure. We proposed no vague committee of inquiry, in order to devolve the responsibility from ourselves upon the committee. We proposed a practical measure in the first instance, and we reduced the duties upon foreign corn one-half. Then, in order to relieve the country from its financial difficulties, we proposed, and we staked the existence of the government on the proposal, to equalize the revenue and expenditure by a direct taxation. But did we appropriate the whole proceeds of that taxation to the payment of the public establishments? No; we proposed to apply a large portion of those proceeds to the remission of duties, in order to feed foreign commercial intercourse, and we revised, almost without exception, the whole commercial tariff of the country. It may suit the purpose of some hon. gentlemen opposite to undervalue the efficacy of these measures, but the hon. member for Montrose has not pursued that course. He has said that he thinks the tariff is a measure creditable to those by whom it was proposed, and that he believes that, on the whole, it will be attended with great benefit. But, in revising the tariff, we did not think it advisable to push to too great an extent principles which abstractedly speaking might be sound; or to create a panic, and to disturb the employment of capital, by too sudden and precipitate changes in the commercial laws of the country. My firm opinion is, that we adopted a proper course. I did not think we could be justly charged with an evasion of our duty, or with shrinking from our principles. We are blamed by some for going too far; by others for not going far enough. I ask you, however, to estimate all the difficulties with which we have had to contend, and I think any reasonable man will come to the conclusion that those difficulties have been fairly encountered, and successfully conquered. Then with respect to the Corn-laws, the motion before the House has no reference to the repeal or modification of those laws. It appears to me that any gentleman who may be desirous of a further modification of the Corn-law, or of its absolute repeal, is called upon to resist this motion for vague and indefinite inquiry. If he considers that the Corn-law ought to be repealed, it is open to him to make such a proposition; but an inquiry of this nature can only delay the accomplishment of this object. I earnestly hope no such proposition will be made, for I trust a fair trial will be given to the law which has recently been adopted; but if any hon. gentleman contemplates an alteration of that law, it is competent to him to bring forward the subject without voting for this practically delusive proposition of the hon. member for Greenock. I maintain the opinion which I have formerly expressed—I do not think that any of the proposals I have heard with respect to the Corn-laws would have the effect of mitigating the distress under which the country is labouring. I conceive, indeed, that by too precipitate a change of such a nature, you would involve the agricultural population in distress, and thus add immeasurably to that suffering which already prevails to a lamentable extent among the commercial classes. I find that the commercial prosperity of this country has been co-existent with the laws restraining the import of corn. I learn, on the authority of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, that up to 1837, and for several years preceding, the manufacturing and commercial interests of this country had been in a state of unexampled prosperity, and yet that prosperity was co-existent with laws which prohibited the free import of corn. I know the answer to this will be, that during four years preceding 1837, the price of provisions in this country was unusually low, and that the lowness of price had the effect you anticipate from the import of foreign corn. But during those four years no foreign corn was imported, and consequently you had no demand for the manufacturing produce of this country in consequence of such importation. Your prosperity could not, therefore, be dependent on that commercial intercourse which depends on the import of foreign corn. But is the importation of foreign corn, and the consequent reduction of the price of food, necessary to enable you to compete with the foreign manufacturers? What said the hon. member for Stockport? He said it was as absurd to demand protection for the cotton manufactures of England, as it would be to demand protection for the coal trade at Newcastle; that is to say, that notwithstanding the comparatively high price of food in this country, we have still contrived to outstrip all our competitors in the production of cotton. I cannot deny the distress that prevails in many parts of the country—that it is most grievous in many districts where there are many cotton manufactories, and that it is severe in

other districts. It is said that a great portion of the mills in this country have stopped working; that must be true, of course, with respect to some districts of the country; yet still it is a remarkable thing (I am not citing this paper for the purpose of denying the distress which prevails, the indications of which are too manifest), when we hear of this universal distress in a manufacturing district and the immense extent to which the closing of mills has taken place, that the quantity of cotton taken out for home manufacture, as compared with last year, has not diminished. I have got from Liverpool an account up to the 24th of June of the quantity of cotton taken out for manufacture, and also of the quantity taken out during the same period last year. For the first six months of 1841 there were 464,500 bales of cotton taken out of the warehouses for consumption. Now, I certainly did expect to find, from the statements that were made of the extent to which industry has been paralysed in the present year, as compared with the last, a diminution in the quantity of cotton taken out for manufacturing purposes. But that is not the case. The quantity of cotton taken out in 1841, for the first six months, was 464,500 bales; and the quantity taken out for consumption up to the 24th of June, 1842, was 538,000 bales. So that, notwithstanding the distress and the closing of the mills, yet still the total quantity of cotton taken out for consumption in the first six months of 1842 exceeds that taken out in the first six months of 1841; and I doubt if it is not almost equal to that taken out in the first six months in any preceding year, with one or two exceptions. I know that this is no proof that profits are not greatly diminished, and that distress does not prevail; but still it is a remarkable thing, that during the prevalence of that distress the quantity of cotton taken out has not diminished, but has increased as compared with last year. Sir, I take, in one respect, a more desponding view of the position of this country than hon. gentlemen on the opposite side of the House. I firmly believe that, if you repeal the Corn-laws, and this should produce the effect which you anticipate, that this would not give you a guarantee against the recurrence of severe distress in certain districts of the country. It is my belief, I say, that giving you the repeal of the Corn-laws, and giving you the consequences you anticipate, yet such is the condition of the manufactures (and particularly in this country), I am afraid you must look forward to, occasionally, severe local distress. At this moment, when distress is so severe in some parts of the country, there are new mills in the course of erection. [Hear, hear.] That is a fact. The command of capital induces men, even during periods of severe distress, to construct new mills, and to fill them with new machinery. Now, what must be the consequence of this? Must there not always be in some localities men of small capital, and with imperfect machinery, yet still employing large masses of the population, who would find it difficult to enter into competition with those who could command capital and apply it to the construction of the best machinery, and that ultimately labour would be thrown out of employment? To resist the progress of these improvements is impossible; and though there might be a demand for cotton manufactures, yet there might be simultaneously with that demand the existence of severe distress on account of the sudden application of new machinery to meet that demand. Sir, I won't dwell on this. I could prove it to be the case, and could show that the immediate consequence of the improvement of machinery and the application of capital to the construction of it, had been productive in certain parts of the country of extraordinary results—that the tendency of it was to drive out of employment adult male labour, and to substitute for it the labour of females and children; and the infallible consequence is, that the man of twenty-five or thirty years of age, who up to that period of life has been employed in a cotton manufactory, finds it difficult to turn his hand to any other employment. Now, you must not make the Corn-laws responsible for evils of that kind. It is no impeachment of the invention—the invention may increase on the whole the demand for labour, and may call into employment the mechanism and industry of other nations; the commercial prosperity may be great, yet in certain districts of the country, from which it is difficult to transfer a married man and his large family, the progress of these improvements may produce great distress, even in times when there is a great demand for labour; and in this state of things, even with an increased demand for your manufactures, I could not anticipate that absence of distress and suffering on which some hon. gentlemen calculate. You apply opprobrious terms to our measures for alleviating the distress. You talk of “begging boxes,” and say

that such things ought not to satisfy the people. I admit that it is a much less satisfactory mode of alleviating the existing distress than providing employment, in every respect. In a social point of view, I admit that it is less satisfactory to the honest feelings of those who derive a miserable subsistence from charity, than a demand for labour to enable them, by the sweat of their brows, to gain an honest livelihood. But when the pressure comes, can any one say that even this unsatisfactory mode of relief ought not to be resorted to. And is it wise to disparage such modes of relief, and to discourage such contributions, when you yourselves must feel that no improvement—according to your views—in your own commercial system could provide immediate relief? I was sorry to hear the hon. gentleman (Mr. Gibson) say that the contributions to the Anti-Corn-law League were a more legitimate application of money. Why, even grant that the permanent effects may be so, yet still I do hope the hon. gentleman and those who act with him—particularly after the admissions of to-night, that years must elapse before permanent relief can be afforded—will consider the length and extent of the temporary evil; and, if nothing but temporary remedies are applied, that they will not discourage the charitable contributions of those disposed by their liberality to administer this temporary—I admit, this unsatisfactory relief. Sir, I do give credit to the patience, the high spirit, and the forbearance, with which the people of this country have borne their distress—I do believe that, if left to themselves, they would continue to manifest that patience; and I think them entitled to a higher degree of credit in consequence of the persevering efforts that are made to inflame their minds, and provoke them into disobedience. There are men, it is perfectly true, in those parts of the country, I have conclusive proofs of it, where there is a disposition to patient submission under distress—there are wicked men who are attempting to inflame the minds of the people by the exaggeration of their sufferings and privations. Now, it is quite right for us, as legislators, to be dissatisfied with temporary remedies; it is quite right for us to look for the permanent reduction of these evils; but let us forbear from making these statements; it will not answer any good purpose; it will not be for the interests of the people themselves; it will not be for the interests of society, in times of severe suffering and distress, to goad those who are the sufferers into disobedience of the law, which must be repressed. Sir, I can only think those entitled to still higher admiration who, in despite of such provocation, continue to submit to the law, and to manifest contentment and gratitude for those imperfect modes of relief which are obliged to be substituted for more satisfactory and permanent ones. While, on the one hand, this increases our admiration for their forbearance and submission, at the same time it does on the other provoke our indignation against those who are attempting by violence of language to drive them into courses which must necessarily end, for the preservation of the best interests of society and of their own interests, in leaving to the government no other alternative than the firm repression of disobedience to the law and the maintenance of the peace of the country against every effort to disturb it.

Debate adjourned.

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### LORD AUCKLAND.

JULY 11, 1842.

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, in rising to move the Order of the Day for the House resolving itself into a Committee of Supply, I wish to notice a statement made by a noble lord opposite (Viscount Palmerston) on the last night, or the last night but one, when the House met. That statement was made with reference to the policy pursued by the late government as to the war in Afghanistan. The noble lord stated, that her Majesty's present government had suggested that Lord Auckland should remain as Governor-general of India, and that application had been made to him by her Majesty's government for that purpose. Thence the noble lord had inferred that there was an approval on the part of her Majesty's government of the policy that had been pursued in India. Now, I must decidedly protest against any such inference. In the first place, I should say, that if her Majesty's government had been disposed to avail themselves of the services of Lord Auckland in India, it was

not thence to be inferred that, therefore, they consented to make themselves a party to his policy. There must be every disposition on the part of a government, (whatever difference, in point of political feeling might exist on various subjects,) considering that Lord Auckland had for four years devoted the whole of his time and attention to the duties of his office, to avoid doing anything which might imply a reflection on the person intrusted with the discharge of such important duties. It was natural and generous to abstain from any act that might imply an unfavourable opinion, and might render still greater the difficulties of the situation in which he was placed. I am sorry that the noble lord should have rested his information on a private letter addressed from one gentleman to another; and, as I understand the matter, the communication was conveyed in a private letter from Lord Ellenborough to Lord Auckland. I must confess I am surprised at the noble lord's information, even if the impression it tended to excite were correct. I must say I heard with surprise the noble lord's statement; I was, however, at the time unwilling to make any reference to it, for I did not expect the introduction of the question of the policy of the war in Afghanistan on the third night of the debate on the resolutions of the hon. member for Greenock; and I certainly am desirous, in a matter which at all affects the conduct and character of a Governor-general of India who was about to return to this country—I am desirous to collect the best information as to the facts of the case before I offer any contradiction to the statement of the noble lord. I certainly do not recollect having been a party to any proposal such as that to which the noble lord had on a former evening referred; yet, at the same time, as the noble lord had said that the communication was conveyed in a private letter from Lord Ellenborough to Lord Auckland, it is impossible for me to offer any contradiction. As to the letter, however, I can find no such public letter; and certainly I could add, no such proposition as that which has been referred to had been made with the knowledge and sanction of the government; but I knew the high opinion which was entertained by Lord Ellenborough of Lord Auckland—I knew that opinion was of the most generous kind, and in proof of this I need only refer to the expressions used by Lord Ellenborough at a dinner given to him on the eve of his departure for India by the directors of the East India Company, on the 3rd of November last. On that occasion my noble friend spoke of Lord Auckland in these generous terms:—"He felt also that he was about to succeed a man who, in the office of Governor-general had, he rejoiced to have this opportunity of declaring, exhibited great practical ability in the administration of affairs. In fact, it was a source of great personal as well as public satisfaction to him, united as he had been with the Earl of Auckland in former times by ties of the closest friendship, to observe the indefatigable industry, the great ability, and the extensive knowledge he had brought to the investigation, elucidation, and management, of all the great questions which had come before his government."

That was the public testimony, the generous testimony, of one political opponent to another. I have referred to my own communications with the Board of Directors on the subject of Lord Auckland. I shall not undertake to answer for any communication which might have been made from Lord Ellenborough to Lord Auckland in the same generous spirit, but these are the facts of the case as far as I can ascertain them. Immediately on accepting office I made inquiry with regard to the appointment of the Governor-general of India, and I received from the East India Board the following intimation:—

"INDIA PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS, JULY 8, 1840.

(MINUTE BY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.)

"A request from the honourable court is conveyed to me by this despatch, that I would not in the ensuing spring resign the high office which I have the honour of holding in India; and to a wish to this effect, expressed in this quarter, in terms and in substance so honourable to me, I can, under present circumstances, make but the one answer—that I will not abruptly throw up the trust which has been confided to me, or appear hastily and unduly to shrink from any important responsibility of which it may be supposed that I should be able more easily to acquit myself than could be expected from any one new to the cares and duties of the Indian administration.

"I readily, therefore, consent to postpone any immediate decision upon the time when I may return to England, and it may be assumed that for the next year I shall serve in India, giving in the course of the year such timely notice of my wishes and intentions as public and private considerations may seem to me to require."

The consequence was that Lord Auckland remained in India, and that he did so at the specific request of the Board of Control and of the Board of East India Directors; and the present government found him remaining in India at the express wish of the public authorities in this country. On the 1st of September I found a letter from Lord Auckland. I had made inquiry as to Lord Auckland's intentions, and if I had found that that noble lord had entertained a wish to retain the government of India longer, I never would have advised the Crown suddenly and peremptorily to recal Lord Auckland, and I should have abstained from the exercise of power, retaining, of course, my own opinions. But I must fairly avow it, that if it had been intimated to me that in compliance with the public wish at home Lord Auckland's personal convenience should be consulted, and that he intended to remain in India, I should have thought it an act of gross injustice to that noble lord if I had advised the Crown to dismiss him. The 1st of September was the date when Lord Auckland's intimations were known. The next letter which I found was dated the 7th of April, in answer to my inquiry whether or not Lord Auckland's intentions were known. All was conceived in a friendly spirit, and without the slightest intention of impugning the conduct of Lord Auckland. Lord Auckland wrote Lord Ellenborough a private letter, and intimated that he was desirous to leave India in the June following, at the same time expressing his desire not to leave any great measures unfinished; that he had no objection whatever to the appointment, but the court could not wish him to go for the purpose of taking the government, unless they knew that Lord Auckland had privately fixed the time of his departure. Now the appointment of the Governor-general, it was well known, was with the Court of Directors, with an understanding with the government. There was no objection on the part of Lord Auckland, be it observed, to the appointment of a successor, but the court did not wish this till Lord Auckland should have positively fixed the time of his departure. Then, on the 24th of September, Lord Ellenborough wrote to me in these terms:—

"The chairman read to me to-day a letter received from Lord Auckland's brother, of a tone similar to that of the letter you received from him. I conclude that the next mail will bring his formal resignation. His successor ought to leave England on the 4th of December, in order to be able to communicate with him fully before he leaves India, as it is of the highest importance that this communication should take place. Facts and opinions may, perhaps, be gathered from the records, but without personal communication with Lord Auckland his successor will know little of the men by whom his measures are to be executed.

"ELLENBOROUGH."

And on the 8th of October I proposed, having accepted office on the 1st of September, that Lord Auckland should remain in India until his successor should arrive—Lord Ellenborough having accepted the government of India. These, then, are the facts of the case. Lord Ellenborough might have written a letter to Lord Auckland in terms similar to those which have been publicly avowed. He might have pressed upon Lord Auckland the policy of remaining until his successor should arrive: but it could not be deduced from that fact that Lord Auckland was to remain permanently the Governor-general. I now pass from this subject, and before I move the Order of the Day, I must express what is the position of the government in respect to the votes of supply, the miscellaneous and other estimates, and for the China service. The House must see the necessity of these votes being agreed to as soon as possible. I stated to the House that the time was fast approaching, when considerable inconvenience must arise to the public service unless the House were pleased to assent to them. It was then said that the government ought, at an earlier period, to have called attention to the votes of supply. In answer to that charge, I must remind the House how the time has been occupied by her Majesty's government in respect to measures relating to the financial and commercial position of the country. We have sat eighteen weeks; two days a week only were at the disposal of the

government for part of that time; but through the indulgence of the House, Tuesdays were given up to the government. I believe that if every day had been taken when her Majesty's government had precedence, there would have been fifty-four days. With the general concurrence of the House, I placed upon every day's paper the three measures of the Corn-law, the Income-tax, and the Tariff. The House was occupied on the Corn-law sixteen days, on the Property-tax seventeen days, on the Tariff fourteen days, making together forty-seven days; and I am sure the House must have felt the necessity of not interposing other measures until those had passed. The tariff was at length happily concluded, and came into operation on Saturday last, and I hope the returns of the Custom-house will show that that measure has had a favourable effect, if it were only by removing a suspense which has operated most disadvantageously for trade. We now have to vote, with the sanction of the House, the miscellaneous and China estimates, which are every pressing. There will be a vote for the service of the East India Company for the expenditure in China, which is of urgent importance to the government of India. Besides meeting the extraordinary expenses on account of the war in Afghanistan, we have had to advance largely, on account of the Chinese loan opened in India not having turned out so productively as was expected. A communication has been made to the Court of Directors to render relief by their home treasury, and a communication has been made to the Treasury, and the understanding is, that a sum of £800,000 shall be advanced in payment of sums formerly advanced, in China; that the government of India might suspend their advances on hypothecated goods, provided they should abstain from drawing on the treasury of India for six months, and making an engagement to meet the China expenditure. The first vote to be taken will be for China, and great inconvenience will arise to the East India Company and the public service from any delay in fulfilling the engagements which have been made. With respect to the miscellaneous estimates, I can only state, as might be expected, that this is an additional grant, the vote being made from the 31st of March, one year, to the 31st of March the next year, whilst I am addressing the House now on the 11th of July. We have abstained from applying for these votes, but I think it my duty to state to the House, that many of these votes are exhausted, as in the case of the vote for criminal prosecutions in Ireland. The government had no alternative but making advances, and, as might have been expected, we have postponed payment as long as we could. Great public inconvenience must necessarily arise from any further delay, for which I cannot be charged, and shall not hold myself responsible; and I therefore hope, that the House will not, through any courtesy to the government, but for the sake of the public interest—I hope, I repeat, that the House will not sanction any unnecessary delay, which will have the effect of impeding the public business.

Lord Palmerston having replied,—

Sir R. Peel said, the noble lord had read a passage of a letter from Lord Ellenborough, in which it was stated that no appointment that could be made could convey the slightest reflection or imputation on Lord Auckland. Lord Auckland, it must be observed, had been asked to stay a year after May, 1840. And what was his answer?—"I will readily, therefore, consent to postpone any immediate decision upon the time when I may return to England, for it may be assumed that for the next year I shall serve in India, giving in the course of the year such timely notice of my wishes and intentions as public and private considerations may seem to require."

Well, on the 7th of September last, it having become time that some step should be taken in the matter, the government of India was asked, what was to be done? What was the answer of the President of the Board of Control?—"There is no objection to naming a successor, but the court would not wish him to go for the purpose of taking the government until they know that Lord Auckland has positively fixed the time of his departure."

He need not state to the House that he was not withholding any other communications than those he had read. He had read every thing bearing on the point in his possession, and he could, therefore, only say again—of course not undertaking to answer for what private communication a man of generous feeling like Lord Ellenborough might have addressed to Lord Auckland,—that the House would see he could by no possibility have been a party to any such communication.

After a short conversation the subject dropped.

## REPEAL OF THE CORN-LAWS.

JULY 11, 1842.

On the question that the Order of the Day for a Committee of Supply be read—  
Mr. Villiers moved as an amendment, "That, previously to granting any supply, this House should go into Committee, to take into consideration the present Corn-law, with a view to its total repeal."

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, I am grateful to the hon. and gallant officer (Sir C. Napier) for the expression of opinions so congenial to my own feelings, and so conducive to my health. I am glad to hear it admitted by the hon. and gallant gentleman, that the question of the Corn-laws has been fully discussed, and that it is unfair as well as unjust to adopt such a mode of stopping the supplies. I am also glad to hear the hon. and gallant gentleman add that upon which I would not venture; namely, that such discussions are an unwarrantable waste of the public time. [Sir C. Napier: I only expressed my own opinion.] That may be the case, but in justice to the other side of the House, I am bound to say that in that opinion he does not stand alone. It is argued that the present Corn-laws are as objectionable as the preceding; and the hon. member for Ashton stated, that under the old system corn was withheld until August and September, when the foreign growers would introduce it in consequence of the duty falling to 1s. The hon. gentleman said that the same objection applies to the present law, and added that if I could show him that the present law was more favourable to the consumer than the former one, I was entitled to some credit for having made the change. Gentlemen on the other side have, however, though I will not say intentionally, adopted a course which in effect prevents my measure from having a fair trial; for whilst any hope exists that parliament will be induced to alter the law, and that corn might be admitted into this country on more favourable terms, the measure can have no fair trial, for the grain will be held back. I have quoted, on a former occasion, an instance, to show that under the existing law corn had come in, not certainly in the quantity I wished, but to a greater extent than under the preceding law. The period to which I alluded was the 23rd of June, when there came in of foreign corn 27,500 quarters, and of colonial corn 6,000 quarters, making in all 33,500 quarters. The hon. member for Liskeard said, that I happened to light on a lucky week, but in answer, I stated, that I took the last week in the returns. I now, however, shall quote the returns of a week later, to show that the results are not so unsatisfactory as some hon. gentlemen would have them believed to be. Notwithstanding the expectation which had been held out respecting an alteration in the state of the law, it appears by the return for the 30th of June, that, for home consumption, there had been brought in from the colonies 5,002 quarters at 1s. duty, and of foreign corn 48,112 quarters. The whole of the corn for home consumption amounted then to upwards of 53,000 quarters. This, then, shows the satisfactory working of the law; and, in addition to this, I am informed that the harvest has already commenced in some parts of the country. The consequence is, a fall of 2s. in Mark-lane, and in other parts of the country there is a similar tendency to a decline of price. This occurred notwithstanding the expected alteration in the law, from which arises a disposition on the part of the holders of corn to keep it back. I repeat, then, that if, under the existing impression that the law is to be altered, such circumstances have occurred, those who hold back with such an impression labour under a great error, and are likely to incur a considerable loss. If they believed that the price would rise till corn would be admissible at a duty of 1s., my belief is, that these parties would have committed a great error, and incurred large loss. It would evidently be most unwise to proceed to condemn the law after an experience of seven weeks; but, even judging from the experience of seven weeks, if you choose to form a judgment from so short an interval as to the effect of a new act of parliament, I think marked symptoms of improvement are perceptible within the two last weeks. Notices of importation under the existing law from very remote parts of the continent, and the prices given at which that wheat can be imported, combine to show that the unfavourable conclusions drawn with respect to the operation of the existing law are not founded on any experience from which you can draw a safe inference. Considering

the motion which was made by the hon. member for Aberdeen, the motion which has been made to-night, and the motion of which the noble lord had given notice, I think you may fairly infer, if the law has not operated so rapidly or so favourably as might have been expected, that a part, if not the whole of that unfavourable operation, is to be ascribed to the expectations which these notices have created in the minds of the dealers that the present arrangement would be disturbed. Nothing shall tempt me to extenuate the facts attested by the reports received from various parts of the country as to the existing distress. It is impossible for me to allude to it without expressing the deepest regret at its existence, and the sincerest sympathy with those who are its unfortunate victims. I say at once, that if I could believe that a material alteration of the Corn-law would produce any permanent relief, not only I, but I am sure those who are, like myself, immediately connected with the land, if they were convinced that the Corn-laws were the main cause of the distress, and that their repeal would give substantial and enduring relief, would instantly relax our determination to maintain them. I am afraid that the measures of commercial reform which government have felt it their duty to propose have had a tendency to increase the stagnation of trade now so severely felt. I think, that even the reduction of the duties on articles in respect to which no difference of opinion prevailed—I am not now speaking of corn or sugar, but of raw materials, on which a reduction took place with satisfaction to the great majority of this House—I say, I believe that in these, as in many other instances, the attempt to effect admitted reforms is accompanied with present, although I trust, only temporary pressure. I think this view is confirmed by a reference to the revenue returns for the last quarter, from which it appears, that on several articles of the Customs there had been a falling-off, and on others an increase. It may be interesting to observe the articles on which there has been an increase of revenue, which is a test of increased consumption, and those in which there has been a decrease, a test of diminished consumption. There has been a decrease in the article of wine. We are now engaged in negotiating commercial treaties on that subject, and I beg to say, we have this day received accounts which inform us, that we have succeeded in carrying into complete effect the intention of the noble lord and the government which preceded us with respect to a commercial treaty with Portugal. This day we have received word that that treaty has been signed, and negotiations have been set on foot for our amended tariff, of which I will only say, that they are proceeding in a satisfactory train. But one effect of this negotiation, and of the prospect of a diminution of duty on wines imported from Portugal, as well as of the impression which was probably anticipated on the government and people of Spain, who might be supposed to be awakened to the policy of entering on negotiations with this country, has necessarily been to paralyze the retail trade and lead to a diminished demand for wine, and the holding back of the stock on hand. I believe it will be more reasonable to attribute the diminution of duty to the doubt caused by pending negotiations, rather than to any diminished power of consumption; but the consequence has been a falling-off in the duty on wine of £108,000. The next article in respect to which a great falling-off of duty has occurred is that of timber. The announcement of an intention to reduce the duties on Baltic timber, and entirely to abolish the duty on Canada timber, has necessarily produced, as was inevitable, some stagnation in the trade. The hon. gentleman opposite reproaches me with not having made the reduction of duty immediately. In all those matters it is of great importance not to press too heavily on existing interests. We determined not to allow any drawback on account of timber imported at the old duties. Urgent remonstrances were made to us as to the individual suffering, the ruin almost, which would be inflicted by any hasty and precipitate reductions of the duties on timber by a given day; and in consideration of those remonstrances we considered it right to postpone the application of the new duty, rather than return to the bad and objectionable system of drawback. But, while endeavouring to do justice to individuals, we have occasionally improved the productiveness of the revenue to some extent. It was doubted at the time, whether it would not have been wiser to make an immediate reduction; but I think I may appeal to those who were in favour of the general policy of the measure, and even to the hon. member for Lambeth himself, whether severe distress would not have



arisen from an immediate reduction. One of the most effectual means of removing the obstacles which impede the progress of sound and salutary reform is, to prove to the country that you can effect them without ruin to individuals: you will thus make it much more solid and enduring. In the present case, the effect which I have noticed has no doubt occurred at a most unfortunate season of stagnation in trade, and the loss of revenue on the article up to the 5th of July has been £113,000. The next articles on which a loss has occurred are those of brandy and rum. Here the effects of the uncertainty prevailing as to wine have been felt, and there has been a loss of £31,000. Let us now look at the chief articles on which there has been an increase, and we shall find they have been articles in no way affected by our commercial reforms. Upon sugar, on which we avowed our intentions, on which a reduction of duty in the course of the present session was not expected, there has been an increase in the revenue for the last quarter to the amount of £113,000. On molasses there has been an increase of £34,000. On cotton-wool, the duty on which I expressed great regret that I could hold out no hopes of being able to reduce, there has been an increase of £96,989. On tea, another article with respect to which we expressed our intention to make no change, there has been an increase of £16,718. Comparing the articles on which there has been a reduction with those on which there has been an increase, I own I am afraid that to the tariff itself is partly attributable an increase of the depression now so much to be deplored. After the declaration I have already made with respect to the necessity of votes of money for the public service, of course, this is not a time to enter into a prolonged discussion on this subject. I have already, at a former period of the session, stated my general views on the financial and commercial policy of the country. I was charged the other night by the hon. member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) with having attributed a portion of the distress under which the country is now labouring to the effect which the rapid introduction of improvements in machinery produces among the labouring classes. I thought I had done all I could to guard myself against being supposed to hold the opinion, either that you can impede the progress of mechanical invention; or, that if you could throw impediments in its way—looking at the general, enlarged, and permanent interests of the country—it would be politic to take any such measure; but at the same time, Sir, I am quite at liberty, if I entertain an opinion regarding the partial and local operation of improvements of that description, to speak the truth. I stated my opinion that the rapid application of improvements in machinery has a tendency, in certain parts of the country where there is less capital and where the machinery is less improved, to throw men out of employment, and consequently to produce distress. Take what course you will on the Corn-laws, the hope that a country so artificial as this, the seat of manufactures so extensive, can be exempted from partial suffering is, I fear, visionary. The hon. gentleman said, that the report made by the assistant Poor-law commissioners who went to Stockport was highly creditable, that their opinions were most just. I am not much disposed to quote the opinion of Poor-law commissioners on a subject of that nature, however high their character, however satisfactory the mode in which their duties are discharged; but these gentlemen took the evidence of all the principal manufacturers and residents in Stockport who were capable of giving them an opinion, and if the hon. gentleman wishes for the evidence of his townsmen, I think he will see I am, at least, fortified by high practical authority in stating, that the immediate effect of the rapid introduction of machinery must be to cause partial distress. I will quote no evidence but what is of high authority and given by persons from Stockport itself. Mr. Lawton, one of the relieving officers of the union, is asked—

“Have the working classes been in distress at Stockport during the whole time of your service, or when did that distress appear to begin, and what has been its progress up to the present time?” He states—“There was no great pressure in the number of applications for relief before the year 1838, excepting under such casual circumstances as the break-down of a mill, or the turn-out of the hands, which have occasionally occurred. About the end of 1838, the applications became more frequent. At that time several of the manufacturers began to introduce improved machinery into their mills, which enabled them to reduce the number of hands. In some cases one man would be enabled to do the work of two by what is called

coupling the frames. There has been a gradual increase of distress since that year, a number of factories having stopped work altogether, and others having worked short time. About the commencement of the last quarter, which ended the 25th of December, 1841, the applications increased in a great degree, in consequence of the stoppage of Messrs. Lanes' and Messrs. Carrs' mills, and a large proportion of those now upon our books were thrown out of work at that time."

The great majority of the witnesses attribute a considerable portion of the evil to the operation of the Corn-laws, but I am now showing that the great majority do admit also that the sudden application of capital to improve machinery must ever have a tendency to produce a diminution of manual labour. The hon. member says—"Do not countenance the vulgar prejudices entertained by the workmen." I do not want to countenance them; I wish to state the truth as to the matters in question; and when the hon. member deals in such lavish abuse of those who hold different views from his, he must allow us, even at the risk of being unfairly charged with countenancing vulgar prejudices, to state the truth, when we are considering this important question, whether the Corn-laws can be assigned as the chief and only cause of the existing distress, and whether their repeal is likely to prove a permanent remedy. I am referring here not to the opinions of speculative writers on the subject, but to the opinions of gentlemen who are his constituents and townsmen, recorded in a report, which he says is entitled to the highest credit. Mr. R. M'Lure in his examination is asked—

"Has there been any reduction in the rate of wages paid in the spinning and weaving mills?" He states—"Within the last two years there has been a reduction very generally; there is no exception to that; if one does it, another must. In the spinning department we have since December, 1839, reduced the wages of labour from 2s. 11d. per 1,000 hanks to 2s. 1d., which has been wholly unconnected with any change in the machinery, or any increase or decrease of production. I have reason to believe that that is about the rate of reduction in the spinning department throughout the town; that is, about 30 per cent. The card-room hands and the throstle-room hands have been reduced about 7½ per cent.; that is also since December, 1839. The weavers' wages have been reduced about 9 or 10 per cent. The other hands connected with the weavers have been reduced in about the same proportion. I believe that the rate of reduction in these departments also has been the same throughout the town."

"What has led to the larger rate of reduction in the spinning department?—Principally the introduction of the self-acting mule, which has been introduced into many of the mills in Stockport and the neighbourhood. We have had self-acting mules in our mill in Heaton Norris since 1834, and have been continually improving our machinery to the present time, by which means we are doing with fewer hands by 100 for the whole mill for the same quantity of work than in 1836, when the mill was first filled with machinery."

Well, but the hon. gentleman said, improvements were very slow in their progress, and that it was almost impossible to get any body to introduce the better machinery; that patents were taken out of which no one would avail himself. The witness whose evidence I have quoted states that they can now get the same quantity of work done by 100 hands less than in 1836, in consequence of the machinery which has been introduced. I do not say that it would be wise in government to check the extension of machinery. I do not say that this is not the instrument which will enable us most effectually to sustain the competition of foreigners. I do not say that ultimately and permanently there will not be a vast increase of strength from machinery. I am countenancing no vulgar prejudices, but when in 1841 I see that the same quantity of work can be done in one mill by 100 hands less than in 1836, I cannot help still retaining my opinion that improvements in machinery must have an immediate and local effect, and it is unjust to make such charges against me when I am only with fairness, and I trust with temper, stating the causes which must be sought for to account for the distress. The third witness I shall quote is Mr. Cruttenden, the partner in a well-known firm at Stockport, selected, I presume, as being the most intelligent and enlightened. His evidence is as follows:—

"Are you of opinion that there has been any falling-off in the home consumption of manufactures in this country?—I have no reason to believe there has,

if you look to the whole of Great Britain and Ireland. We manufacture entirely for the home trade; and we have not produced as much as we used to do, because the present rate of prices does not remunerate us. By working short time we lost about three months in 1840, and more than three months in 1841. But then during the last few years the number of producers has very much increased, and I believe that there has been quite as much cotton actually consumed in the home market as ever. It must be remembered, as I stated before, that there has been an immense increase in production. Owing to the improvements in machinery a much greater amount of goods can be manufactured in a certain period of time than formerly. By working full time, we ourselves could manufacture nearly twenty miles of calico a day; and when you consider the immense amount of steam power employed in the cotton manufacture, this will give you some idea of the powers of production which are daily in operation, and which must have a tendency to reduce prices."

"Do you think that the laws affecting trade have contributed in any degree to cause the distress at present existing in Stockport, or in other manufacturing districts?—I do not think they have had much to do with it. I am aware some persons suppose that the Corn-laws have been the cause of our present distress. I believe that the distress has arisen in a far greater degree from the immense increase in the amount of capital which has been employed in the cotton trade, and the consequent unnatural increase in the production of manufactured goods."

I shall trouble the House with but one more short passage from the evidence of Mr. Forster, the chairman of the board of guardians, I believe a most respectable person, who formed one of a deputation with which I had an interview on Saturday morning, and who fills the situation he now holds solely from a sense of public duty. He says,

"What has induced the guardians to adopt so strict a practice in reference to removals?—We think it, in the long run, for the interest of the town, to remove all those who are burdensome, and do not belong to us, notwithstanding the expense which attends their removal. The great improvements which have recently been made in the machinery of factories have reduced the demand for labour; and the present prospects of trade are such, that there is little probability of the hands now idle getting into employment within a moderate period of time. We have to consider many conflicting interests on this point; it is the apparent interest of the manufacturers and shopkeepers to retain the population here; but, on the other hand, our own settled labouring population may be benefited by reducing the supply of hands under these adverse circumstances; and what weighs with us mainly is, that the rate-payers ought to be relieved, by such means as the law affords, from the burden of maintaining those who are no longer useful to the town."

The hon. gentleman spoke of £30,000 having been applied to the erection of new machinery. Now, suppose some temporary cause—the fire at Hamburgh, for instance—creates an unusual demand for some description of goods. A person having the command of such an immense mechanical power is enabled to supply the demand, and the advantage of machinery is, that we can defeat foreign competition in any market where there is an extraordinary demand. Compare the effect produced by this machinery with the condition of countries in which there is less machinery and capital, and do not tell me that there may not be very severe distress in certain localities co-existing with general manufacturing prosperity. That was all I said on a former night, that opinion I decidedly retain, and I fear that in this country, even when trade is prosperous, we must still expect that there may be in some districts a great amount of suffering. The hon. gentleman the member for Oldham asked me to pay attention to his observations. I did pay the utmost attention I could, but I think most hon. members must have observed, that it is not very easy to catch what falls from the hon. member. The hon. gentleman said, that in 1815 the handloom weaver received 27s. a week, the price of corn then being 63s. 9d.; that in 1824 the price of corn was 62s., and the wages of the handloom weaver had fallen to 13s. 6d.; in 1833 the price of corn was 53s., and the wages had been reduced to 8s. a week, and in 1842 they were reduced to 3s. a week. Now, I cannot conceive that any operation of the Corn-laws can be the main cause of this extraordinary fall. There must be some other cause. Whatever may be the effect of machinery or

competition in producing this depression of wages I know not, but when I compare the price of corn in 1815 with its present price, and when I look at the vast quantity of cotton imported, manufactured, and exported, and retained for home consumption, — when I consider the marvellous increase which has taken place in the purchase of the raw material, and in manufactured goods, and when at the same time I look at the rapid decrease of wages, as stated by the hon. gentleman, at the time when manufactures have been increasing in a most extraordinary way, I cannot, I repeat, attribute this diminution of wages mainly to the operation of the Corn-laws. Here is an account of cotton manufactured since 1831. I have no means of comparing the increase with 1815; but since 1831 there has been a most extraordinary increase in the quantity of cotton imported for manufacture and retained for home consumption, and the quantity of cotton goods exported. In 1831 the total quantity of cotton spun was 208,000,000 lbs., and in 1841 it amounted to 337,000,000 lbs. The total quantity of yarn manufactured goods in 1831 was 70,000,000 lbs., and in 1841 it had risen to 138,000,000 lbs. Now, though it might be that we do not take corn in exchange for our cotton goods, yet the quantity of goods exported, for which we receive some sort of return, has been enormously increased, comparing 1841 with 1831, and with 1815 also, when the wages of the artisan were so high, as described by the hon. gentleman, and when corn was about 64s. a quarter. The increase of the trade, as measured by the imports and exports, has been most extraordinary. I was also taunted by the hon. member for Stockport for having referred to the necessity of maintaining the public tranquillity. However much we may lament the sufferings of the people, however inadequate our measures may be deemed by way of remedy for the distress, yet it is for the interest of all parties that the government should maintain the public peace. I said that the people had shown unexampled patience in the midst of their distresses, and I was deprecating appeals to their passions, and the use of exciting language. In this feeling I should expect that every true friend of the working classes themselves would concur. Reference was made in the House the other night to a handbill headed "Murder," in large letters, and I was glad to hear the hon. gentleman state that he knew that the members of the Anti-Corn-law Association decidedly deprecated the issue of handbills of that nature. I think, he said, he knew they were no parties to the issue of the handbill in question; that they discountenanced it in every manner, and had read the expressions contained in it with the deepest regret. I was glad to hear that declaration from the hon. gentleman; at the same time I think there ought to be a more effectual measure taken for the purpose of manifesting a severance between disseminators of bills of this character and those who profess to have the true interest of the working classes at heart. I was determined to make no reference to this handbill without information, but these facts have been stated to me: — "The inflammatory placard headed 'Murder' continues to be issued in a shop in Market-street, Manchester. The placard was still exhibiting on the 23rd of June, at No. 22, Market-street. Above the door of this house there are printed the words, 'The dépôt for the National Anti-Corn-law League.' The printer of the placard, who is the tenant of that shop, is the printer and publisher for the Anti-Corn-law League. About four doors distant from this 'dépôt' was a building in which the Anti-Corn-law League held their meetings."

I am glad to hear from the hon. member that the members of the Anti-Corn-law League express their disapprobation of the exhibition of this placard; and I trust what I have stated may induce them to take steps which may make it impossible for any person to attribute to them any participation in appeals of this nature to a suffering population. In the course of these debates it has been repeatedly said that "something must be done. Let the government state what they mean to propose for the relief of the people. We look for relief." I advert not to subscriptions; but I trust nothing will be done that shall have a tendency to check their progress. I trust the country will still feel the obligation of contributing towards the funds raised for the purpose of alleviating the existing distress. Yet I am convinced that this is no permanent remedy for the distress—it is only a temporary provision. It effects much good by mitigating the sufferings of the people, and I trust that even those who may disapprove of the policy of the government will do nothing tending to diminish the amount of these benevolent contributions. It would be perfectly

consistent for persons to disapprove of the commercial policy, and yet not to throw any obstructions in the way of the subscriptions which are being collected. I stated in the early part of the session that my hope of permanent relief for the suffering which afflicts the country consisted in an extension of the commerce of the country. I stated also the general principles on which I thought that commerce ought to be established. I stated, and I am ready now to repeat the statement, that if we had to deal with a new society, in which those infinite and complicated interests which grow up under institutions like those in the midst of which we live had found no existence, the true abstract principle would be "to buy in the cheapest market, and to sell in the dearest." And yet it is quite clear that it would be utterly impossible to apply that principle in a state of society such as that in which we live, without a due consideration of the interests which have grown up under the protection of former laws. While contending for the justice of the abstract principle, we may at the same time admit the necessity of applying it partially; and I think the proper object is first of all to lay the foundation of good laws, to provide the way for gradual improvements, which may thus be introduced without giving a shock to existing interests. If you do give a shock to those interests, you create prejudices against the principles themselves, and only aggravate the distress. This is the principle on which we attempted to proceed in the preparation of the tariff. I admit that we have not applied, and I have stated the grounds on which we abstained from applying, to the great articles of subsistence the principle of buying in the cheapest market. I frankly admit this. With respect to corn, I think it possible, if you repealed all protection, a present stimulus must be given to manufactures; but the time might come when, notwithstanding the stimulus given to manufactures, if the effect of that repeal should be to discourage domestic agriculture, and render you dependent on foreign supplies, you would repent of the measure you had adopted. I do not wish to enter into this argument, but I hope it may be borne in mind that we did reduce the duties on foreign corn to an extent which induced many gentlemen on the other side to upbraid us with having broken faith with the country gentlemen, and to allege that I was disintituled to the support of those who placed me in office. The duties were reduced more than one-half. I have already stated that I think those who disapprove of the law too hasty and precipitate in their condemnation. I think it is entitled to a fair trial. The period will shortly come when it will be subject to that trial, and in the meantime I deprecate inconvenient discussions like the present, which may have the effect of retarding the attainment of an object so desirable. With respect to sugar, no reduction has been made, but the motive you assign for this is entirely without foundation. I utterly deny that we abstain from reducing the duty for the purpose of conciliating Parliamentary support by giving undue protection to the West Indian interest. I believe that that interest is one of the weakest in the country; and I deny that our conduct with respect to sugar has arisen from any unworthy motives. To judge properly of the measure introduced by the government, altering the duties on foreign produce with a view to the relief of trade, you must look at its whole effect. With respect to the enactments of the tariff regarding cattle, what was stated by an hon. gentleman opposite? He said that three or four years ago he contemplated the same kind of measure, but was told by the then President of the Board of Trade that it would be considered revolutionary by the agricultural interest. At any rate, we propose a measure which, for its reduction of duty, gave general satisfaction to those who ask for a reduction of duty on agricultural produce. At the commencement of this year declarations were being constantly made about the comparative prices of meat in this country and abroad. There were constant prophecies that no attempt would be made to deal with the monopoly of provisions in respect of cattle and meat. In respect to rice, potatoes, fish, and various other articles of subsistence, there have been made most extensive reductions of duty; and with respect to raw materials there was likewise a reduction, such as the advocates of free-trade could scarcely complain of. The effect of all this change could not yet be fairly estimated. But then it was asked, "Do we intend to do nothing else? We do intend, agreeably to the recommendation of a committee, to permit the taking of foreign corn out of bond, on substituting for it in the warehouse, or delivery for exportation, an equivalent quantity of flour or biscuit. With respect to other countries, it will be our endeavour to

extend on the true principles of reciprocal advantage, the commerce of the country. An hon. gentleman opposite asked, why have we not meddled with the banking laws? What would have been the advantage of such a course? Every day at the disposal of the government has been consumed in the consideration of the measures I have mentioned, and up to the present time we have scarcely been able to pass more than the first clause of the Poor-law. What encouragement then, have we to introduce a measure which, when introduced, ought to be brought to a practical conclusion? Does the hon. gentleman think the public advantage would be consulted by tossing on the table of the House a bill affecting the whole banking interests, and leaving it unfinished? Instead of affording relief, this would only tend to aggravate distress. With respect to the Income-tax, we have been taunted with having done nothing but introduce that measure. We brought it forward as a substitute in part for other taxation, which we thought was pressing more heavily on the industry of the country. We introduced it because there was an absolute deficiency of revenue, and because we thought it desirable, in reference both to the public service and the public credit, that this deficiency should be made up. I thought, and the country thought so too, that it would be wise to make a great sacrifice to supply the deficiency; and never did the country respond with greater unanimity to the demand which was made upon it. Hon. gentlemen may think the country wrong; but could any government ever have carried that measure against a decided expression of public opinion? Instead of hostility, there has been a decided expression of feeling throughout the country that the deficiency ought to be supplied; and though I will not contend that an Income-tax, or taxation of any kind, has any other effect than that of curtailing in some respect, the amount of capital applicable to the productive interest of the country, yet I maintain, that as there was a necessity to raise £4,000,000, the best course to pursue in the present condition of the country, was to levy that amount on the property of the country, rather than on articles which entered into consumption. These are the measures which, with the consent of parliament, the government have passed. As I have before said, the government have entered into negotiations with other countries. A treaty has been satisfactorily concluded with Portugal, and treaties are pending with other countries. I hope, now that we have been able to bring these measures to a conclusion, with some difference of opinion on this side of the House, on account of the alarm given to the agricultural interests, that they will be allowed to have a fair trial; and if they do not prove calculated to increase the prosperity of the country, if they should prove inadequate to meet the distress of the country, in that case I shall be the first to admit that no adherence to former opinions ought to prevent their full and careful revision; but I hope that no precipitate conclusion will be come to but that a fair experiment will be made, in order that we may see whether they have a tendency to revive the prosperity of the country, and to terminate that stagnation which no person in this great community views with deeper concern than those who are immediately responsible for the government of the country.

Mr. Villiers's amendment was negatived, and the House went into committee; several votes were agreed to, and the House adjourned.

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## ELECTION PROCEEDINGS.

JULY 28, 1842.

Mr. Roebuck moved the following resolution, being the first of a series founded on the report of the Election Proceedings Committee:—"That the compromises of election petitions, as brought to the knowledge of this House by the report of the Committee on election proceedings, must, if for the future they be allowed to pass without punishment or censure, tend to bring this House into contempt with the people, and thereby seriously to diminish its power and authority."

Mrs. ROBERT PEEL said: The hon. gentleman the member for Bath, in the speech by which he had opened the present motion to the House, stated that he had received from me a consistent and decided support in the former proposal he had made for an inquiry into these transactions. The hon. gentleman had made that willing admission, and I cannot say, although I know the course I pursued on that

occasion caused some dissatisfaction and led to some animadversion, that, on reflecting upon the matter, I see any reason to regret that course. I certainly did think that the notoriety and development of those proceedings—the public notification that compromises, as they were called, had taken place, should not prevent the House from instituting an inquiry—I certainly did think that the very inquiry and development of the facts of the transactions referred to, would operate as a strong discouragement to their repetition; but at the same time that I stated this much I had a strong impression that it would be unjust on the part of the House of Commons to brand with peculiar censure those hon. members who had been parties to these proceedings. I felt that for very many years those compromises had taken place almost with the connivance of the House of Commons itself. I felt that it was notorious such compromises were made, and I think, whatever might be wrong in those compromises, the House of Commons itself ought to bear a considerable portion of the blame, because the fact being notorious, the House had permitted them to pass for years without the slightest attempt to discourage them or to visit the parties to them with censure; and therefore when the notoriety of the facts was such that inquiry could not be prevented, still my object in consenting to that inquiry and these proceedings, was not, as I avowed from the first, to imply a censure upon the individuals mixed up in them, but for the prevention of the system. I thought not only that the appointment of a committee of inquiry would operate as a strong discouragement to future compromises, but I was ready to go further, and to take legislative precaution against the continuance of the practice; and I also thought the result of the proceedings of the committee would be, that the hon. gentleman the member for Bath would move some such resolution as this, namely, that it is desirable, in consequence of the disclosure made before the committee, of which the hon. gentleman was chairman, that immediate measures should be taken by parliament to correct, by legislation, such a system as had been proved to exist; and if that had been the motion of the hon. gentleman the member for Bath, it should have received my support. But only last night a bill (one of the objects of which is to prevent compromises of this kind) was passed through committee, and, therefore, it appears to me unnecessary now to pass resolutions of this kind. As to the mode of conducting the inquiry, I think the hon. gentleman the member for Bath has been hardly dealt with. The appointment of the committee was the act of the House of Commons—the House had associated with the hon. member for the purpose of the inquiry and investigation, eight other gentlemen of the highest character. From this side of the House there were selected Sir William Heathcote, Mr. Lascelles, Mr. Bramston, and Mr. W. Miles. For two of those gentlemen Mr. E. Yorke and Mr. Wilson Patten were subsequently substituted. The report and the proceedings of the committee thus appointed and selected I consider to be the report and proceedings, not of the hon. gentleman the member for Bath, but of the tribunal which was appointed by the House of Commons itself. It is true, the hon. gentleman was chairman of the committee, but that was the act of the committee which elected him chairman; and therefore, for the whole of the proceedings before the committee I consider the select committee appointed by this House, and not the hon. gentleman, to be responsible; and I cannot see in the manner in which their proceedings had been conducted, or in the mode in which truth was elicited, any departure from the ordinary course taken by other committees appointed for similar purposes, which can justify a condemnation of the mode in which this particular committee has discharged the duty assigned to them. While I relieve the hon. gentleman from personal responsibility for the proceedings, or the report, or the mode in which the evidence was taken, yet at the same time I must attach some weight to the recommendations of the committee, and I cannot think, looking at the third paragraph of the report, that the committee ever contemplated any such proceeding as that in which the hon. gentleman has now engaged. The committee, in their report, state that—"they understand their duty to have been to elicit and lay before the House, faithfully and clearly, all the facts of the several cases, rather with a view to expose the evils of a system than by any direct expression of their own opinion to inculcate individuals, or directly to lay the foundation for any legislative enactment with respect to the particular boroughs in question; and they consider that they are borne out in this opinion by the nature of the debates in the House upon the motion for the appointment of the committee, and upon several

subsequent occasions. In this view of their duty, the committee called before them the parties immediately concerned in these transactions; and the committee feel bound, in justice to those parties, to state, that their willingness to appear, with few exceptions, and the full and frank disclosures made by them, have tended greatly to facilitate the proceedings of your committee; and they have consequently been enabled to obtain from the most authentic source evidence relative to practices which although supposed to have existed, have never before been so clearly and unquestionably brought to light."

Now, I cannot help thinking that the parties who so gave their evidence did so under the impression—which I also thought to be the impression of the House at the time the inquiry was agreed to—that if they fairly disclosed the facts of the case they would be entitled to indemnity. Under that impression, and also on the understanding that we were to take due precautions against the continuance of the system, I gave my vote for the committee, but not in order that we might visit with censure those five or six gentlemen who had been concerned in these compromises; and here is an admission by the committee that the evidence relative to these practices had exhibited them in a clearer light than had ever yet appeared; so that the House had now got the testimony from willing witnesses, and I must say I cannot reconcile it with my sense of justice now to select for censure those particular individuals. [Captain Bernal: How do you provide for the future?] I provide for the future by the bill last night under discussion. But how did the hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Roebuck) meet the case? His resolutions are, "That the compromises of election petitions must, if for the future they be allowed to pass without punishment or censure, tend to bring this House into contempt with the people, and thereby seriously to diminish its power and authority."

And further,—“That all such practices are hereby declared to be a violation of the liberties of the people, and a breach of the privileges of this House, which it will in all future cases strictly inquire into and severely punish.”

Why, that being translated, means no more than this: “You have been guilty of an offence which is a violation of the liberties of the people, and a breach of the privileges of the House. Still we will not call you to the bar and censure you, but any person who hereafter in like manner may offend, we will.” But there are several other parts of these resolutions with which I am not satisfied. The hon. gentleman, by his resolutions, declared these practices to be a violation of the liberties of the people, and a breach of the privileges of the House. Now, I do not like dealing with general terms of this kind. I think the House ought not lightly to adopt such a declaration. The hon. gentleman does not state the particular nature of the compromise which shall constitute a violation of the liberties of the people and a breach of the privileges of the House; but he refers to certain compromises, all of which differ in character, and, speaking generally, says, they are breaches of privilege and violations of the liberties of the people. If they be so, why do you not go on and censure the parties to them? When you talk of inefficient proceedings is it not inefficient to pass by those guilty of these violations? Why, you abstain from censuring them because we gave them reason to believe that if they gave their evidence fairly, they should not be visited with censure. I cannot reconcile it to my mind, as a fair proceeding, to brand these parties after they have so given their evidence, with censure. Their evidence has been obtained upon a distinct understanding that the inquiry was set on foot, and the investigation gone into in order to put an end to the system, but not to punish them. I think the hon. gentleman agrees with me that that was so. [“Hear, hear.”] Well, then, I think the hon. gentleman's resolutions have the effect of branding these parties with a sort of qualified and implied censure. I concur with the hon. gentleman in thinking that in all future cases you should deal strictly with such compromises, but I will not do so by mere resolutions, but I will do it by law. I wish to see a law passed which shall ensure a full inquiry into, and a remedy against such practices, but I am not quite certain that they are a breach of the privileges of the House, because when the House passed the Elections Trial Bill, it divested itself of the charge of inquiring into bribery, and said to individuals, “We leave it to you to prefer and defend charges of bribery,” and the legislature visited with costs those who preferred or advanced frivolous and vexatious charges or defences; and I think the House when



it adopted that course, be it wise or be it wrong, left to individuals the vindication of the purity of the House, and therefore the House ought to take care not to visit with severe censure the parties to such compromises, and by legislation rather than by resolution to prevent them in future. If, therefore, as I have already said, the hon. member had moved a resolution to the effect that the disclosures made before the committee required a legislative remedy, to that resolution I would have now given my support; and it is only because there is a bill before the House which will effectually, I think, ensure a remedy, that I believe it unnecessary to come to the resolutions proposed. So much for the first two resolutions. With regard to the last,—“That whereas in the late elections for Harwich, Nottingham, Lewes, Reading, Falmouth and Penryn, and Bridport, the present laws have been found insufficient to protect the voters from the mischievous temptations of bribery, it be ordered that Mr. Speaker do issue no writ for any election of members for the said towns till further legislative enactments have been adopted to protect the purity of elections.”

I cannot acquiesce in it. On a former occasion I stated strongly the danger of establishing precedents for the suspension of any particular writ, but to make a general resolution pledging the House in six cases involving the seats of twelve members is, as my hon. and learned friend the Solicitor-general has pointed out, full of danger, inasmuch as on a nice balance of parties in the House the majority might retain the balance of power. I think it may be right to suspend the writ for any borough in case you are about to deprive that borough of the franchise, or to institute an inquiry with that view, but I greatly doubt whether you have any right to suspend the issue of a writ on the vague intimation that you contemplate some general measure with regard to bribery. In this case it is not intended; at least no notice has been given of any such intention to disfranchise these particular boroughs. It is merely proposed to suspend the writs until further legislative enactments are adopted. From these resolutions, if once adopted, it will be difficult to recede. In the case of Bridport there is no compromise for vacating the seat—there is no seat vacant—and yet the hon. member opposite (Mr. Roebuck) invites us to agree to a resolution which in that case will have the effect of suspending the writ whenever a vacancy may occur. Again, to pledge the House to suspend these writs until some legislative enactments were passed is, in my mind, a course not only inconsistent with justice, but most dangerous as a precedent. At some future period there might be a difference of opinion between the two Houses of Parliament on the subject of legislating with regard to bribery; and yet by these resolutions the constituent body must forfeit their right to return members until both the Lords and Commons had consented to some bill which they both might think essential for the prevention of bribery. On that ground, therefore, I must vote against the resolution. At the same time it is my intention to support the bill which we have lately considered, and which I trust will have the effect so generally wished for, of deterring from compromises, and rendering the proceedings connected with elections more pure.

Resolutions negatived, and the House adjourned.

### CAPTAIN WARNER'S INVENTION.

AUGUST 4, 1842.

Sir F. Burdett moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the negotiations of the government with Mr. Warner, concerning his invention.

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, I am sorry that so much of the valuable time of the House should have been occupied with a subject of this description. Although I have arrived at a conclusion different from that which the hon. baronet near me has urged upon the House, yet I am perfectly ready to give him full credit for having brought the motion forward with the most perfect good feeling, and I am quite satisfied that my hon. friend was influenced by the best feeling. Nevertheless, I am bound, in my own defence and that of the government, to lay the facts before the House, inasmuch as the motion for a select committee implied something like a reflection upon the line of conduct pursued by the responsible advisers of the

Crown. The hon. baronet said, that if there were a full House he had no doubt that he should be able to carry his motion. Now, if the whole 658 members were at this moment assembled, I do not believe there would be found amongst them ten men who would support the hon. baronet on a question like the present. The proposition is, that we should have a select committee,—to do what? Was it intended that they should try experiments? If fifteen members were selected from one side of the House, and fifteen from the other, to try if Mr. Warner had fulfilled his undertakings, how could that gentleman's secret be preserved? It appears to me, that to take this matter out of the hands of the Board of Admiralty and the Board of Ordnance, implies a sort of reflection on me for not having more freely and decisively supported the views of Mr. Warner. I assure the House, that though I am an unprofessional man, I still have given to this matter a great deal of attention; and with reference to all such real or supposed discoveries, I have thought that my duty was to pursue a middle course. I think that on the one hand, a public man is culpable if he wholly disregards suggestions of this nature; and, on the other, equally culpable if upon slender grounds he lends himself too unreservedly to their support. Twenty years' experience has taught me that we are not to take things of this sort for granted, and pay £400,000 for a secret, the efficacy of which has not yet been tested. Every man in office has been in the habit of receiving applications of this nature—not a day passes without something of the sort—some most specious proposal. But respecting this case, we have had rather a remarkable statement, in which, after a warm panegyric upon the character of King William, in which every one must concur, the writer states that that sovereign had given a distinct assurance to Mr. Warner that all his expectations would be realised. I think, looking at the professional experience of King William, that it was not very likely he would have given any such assurance; however, as he is now not living, we have no means of knowing how the matter really stood. As we can say nothing further on this subject, I wish next to recall the attention of hon. members to the frequency of applications of this nature, and to the fact that Mr. Warner is not the only person who lays claims to discoveries. I hold in my hand a letter dated the 11th of July, 1842, and which is in these words:—"Fourteen years ago I made experiments in Italy, before several officers, on implements of war, of power unsurpassed, and I was urged by them to come home to lay them before his Majesty's government. By his Majesty, on the certificates produced, I was assured of every reward if I would disclose the secret. The prosecution of my professional studies suggested the composition to me. One species is superior to Mr. Warner's, as a single shot, striking a line-of-battle ship, would consign her to destruction. I cannot go the length required by the Ordnance, of £500 deposit, to make undisclosed experiments."

With numerous applications of this kind, what course was open to me? I am sure hon. members do not think that I should at once have complied with Mr. Warner's demands. I am, however, enabled to tell the House that much more was done for Mr. Warner than has been done for any one else similarly circumstanced. His application was treated with a great deal more consideration than usual. The practice is to allow people in general to try their experiments, but at their own expense. If every man in society possessed the power of insisting that his theories and speculations should be tested by experiments at the public expense, the whole time of the public departments would be wasted and the cost would be enormous. Therefore the rule is that experiments shall not be tried unless those who allege that they have made discoveries or perfected inventions give *prima facie* evidence of their sincerity and good faith by trying the experiments at their own expense, the public departments affording them every reasonable facility. To show the consideration with which this supposed discovery was treated, it is enough to say that I consented that Mr. Warner's experiments might be tried at the public expense. Mr. Warner stated that he could cast his projectiles to a distance of six miles, with a force sufficient to produce the gigantic effects which he promised. This appeared most marvellous, but I was not deterred. Wonderful as it seemed I did not scout the proposition. The bulk was ready at six miles' distance; two experienced and distinguished officers, Sir B. Martin and Sir H. Douglas, were ready to witness the experiments, and the secret was not to be divulged. With these facts before the House, I confess I am at a loss

to understand how hon. members can agree to a motion thus reflecting upon us. Mr. Warner, before he would proceed to try any experiments, required that a sum of £400,000 should be guaranteed to him by her Majesty's government in the event of his being successful. But then, what is success? Could he accomplish these remendous results in the face of an enemy? Could he effect them under all circumstances? This did not appear likely from the experiments which were tried, and, therefore, I would not promise him a single shilling. I could not guarantee the payment of public money under hypothetical circumstances, though I agreed that the cost of the experiments should be defrayed at the public expense. It is not immaterial to observe that this matter has been under the consideration of the executive government ever since the year 1834. At one time, when a proposition was made to try the experiments before officers of both branches of the service, Mr. Warner required that Lord Hardwicke and Lord Ingestre should be present, but I decidedly objected to Mr. Warner's appointing any nominees, though no one can entertain a higher opinion than I do of the two noble lords whose names I have just mentioned. At different periods since the year 1834 the subject has been under the consideration of successive boards of Admiralty. The correspondence which has passed upon these subjects will best show what really has occurred, and with the permission of the House I propose to read a letter addressed to Colonel Couper, and dated the 8th of July, 1834. It is in these words:—"I am directed by Lord Auckland to request you will acquaint Sir James Kempt that an application has been made to his lordship by Major Fancourt, M.P. for Barnstable, and Commander Warner, of the navy, for permission to have some experiments in gunnery, proposed by Commander Warner, tried before a mixed committee of ordnance and naval officers; and that it is stated to his lordship by Commander Warner, that a promise was made to him some months ago, by Sir James Graham and Sir James Kempt, that an opportunity of trying his experiments should be afforded to him. Commander Warner further states that he will be ready in about a week to appear before a committee."

I shall next read to the House another letter to Colonel Couper, altering, at Mr. Warner's request, the arrangement made by the preceding communication. It is dated the 14th of July, 1834, and is as follows:—"There has been, I am sorry to say, some little mistake in the matter of Captain Warner's experiment, about which I wrote to you a few days ago. Captain Warner has been at the Admiralty this morning, and produced a letter from Sir J. Graham, dated the 27th of February last, in which Sir James acquiesces in the proposition made by Captain Warner, that the exhibition shall be a private one, and consequently Captain Warner now objects to its being made at Woolwich. He also wishes that three officers only of each service should be present instead of six, and says that it would be more convenient to him if the day of exhibition were to be fixed for Monday the 21st, instead of Friday the 18th. Lord Auckland therefore now proposes to make an alteration in the Admiralty minute to meet Captain Warner's wishes; and I am to request you will move the Master-general to do the same with respect to the Ordnance, and to fix Wanstead-park, in Essex (ten miles from London), as the place for the experiment to be tried at, before three officers of each service, on Monday, the 21st inst., at 2 p. m.

I shall now read the official report of what occurred after the time and place had been fixed for trying these extraordinary experiments:

"WOOLWICH, July 21, 1834.

"SIR,—I have the honour to report, for the information of the Master-general, that in obedience to his commands, signified in your letter of the 15th inst., Colonel Williamson, Sir A. Dickson, and myself, proceeded to-day to Wanstead-park, to witness the intended experiment of Commander Warner; but after making every inquiry in the neighbourhood we could only at last learn that Captain Warner had left his house at Claybury this morning for London, and that his return was uncertain. Under these circumstances we returned to Woolwich to attend to any further directions which we may receive on the subject.

"I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

"A. F. FRAZER,

"Colonel Royal Horse Artillery."

"Lieutenant-colonel Couper, &c."

Thus ended the proceedings of that period. Then came the experiments which were to be tried in the presence of Sir Howard Douglas and Sir Byam Martin, and he met those distinguished officers by declining to try any experiments unless he received a guarantee for £400,000. No doubt there may be, and we know that there are, compositions capable of producing tremendous results—nitrate of silver, for example. It is well known that a person recently engaged in experiments on that substance was himself blown to atoms, and the building in which he had been trying his experiments very materially injured. It is no new discovery, then, to announce that a combination may be produced more powerfully destructive than any which we now have in ordinary use. But the mode in which this invention is to be applied is a matter of much more difficulty than the question as to the material. Considering the demands which are made upon my time and attention, I must say that I think I have given sufficient consideration to this subject, and I hope that, as far as the claim of the right hon. baronet to a select committee is concerned, I have succeeded in blowing Captain Warner out of the water.

Motion negatived.

## PUBLIC BILLS—LATE AND PRESENT MINISTERS.

AUGUST 10, 1842.

Viscount Palmerston, at the conclusion of an elaborate speech, in which he reviewed the acts of the late and of the present government, moved for "A return of the names and titles of all bills brought into parliament during the present session."

SIR ROBERT PEEL: I rise to second this motion, this lame and impotent conclusion to the speech of the noble lord. After questioning every act of the government, after impeaching all their policy, the noble lord contents himself with moving for some details about the dates and titles of bills, about which no man cares a straw. And the noble lord has not even the merit of originality for his motion. He is a humble follower in the footsteps of a gallant member on this side of the House (Colonel Sibthorp), and has not the candour to acknowledge the plagiarism he has committed. Read the noble lord's notice, and compare it with the motion of last year of the member for Lincoln. You will find one literally copied from the other, and that the noble lord's great practical achievement of to-night will be to complete for 1842 Colonel Sibthorp's returns for 1841. I am grateful to the noble lord for the performance of this very useful but somewhat humble duty, I am grateful to him for enabling the public to draw a contrast between the imperfect, bungling efforts at legislation of himself and his colleagues, and the extent and value of the comprehensive measures proposed by the present government, which have received the sanction of parliament in this session. The noble lord commenced his speech by an historical review of the state of parties and public questions since the signature of the definitive treaty of peace. With respect to the Catholic question, I have no complaint to make of the noble lord's observations. I acknowledge the fairness with which the noble lord, on this as on former occasions, has done justice to the motives which influenced my noble friend the Duke of Wellington and myself in bringing forward that measure. Whether the panegyric he made on the course we pursued was not greater than our merits, it is not for me to determine; he did but justice, however, to the motives which influenced us in attempting to settle the Catholic question. The result of that attempt must have been perfectly obvious to us. We could not have failed to foresee that it must withdraw from us the confidence of many of our supporters, and entail the loss of power: we cheerfully submitted to that sacrifice, in obedience to a sense of public duty. The noble lord referred, in the next place, to the question of Parliamentary Reform. He observed, that chiefly on account of the events in Paris of July, 1830, and the revolution that followed them in France, a great comprehensive measure of reform became unavoidable in this country. Surely, when the noble lord calmly reflects on his own conduct in reference to reform (conduct influenced throughout, I doubt not, by honourable motives), he ought to view with toleration the changes of opinion of others. The noble lord, for the long period of twenty years, was the zealous partisan of Perceval, of Castlereagh, of Canning: up to the year 1827, up to the death

of Mr. Canning, the determined unvarying enemy of parliamentary reform, of reform to every extent, and in every shape, the noble lord was the faithful follower of Mr. Canning. In 1830 he became the equally faithful follower of Earl Grey—the determined, unvarying advocate of reform. Did the noble lord, during the lifetime of Mr. Canning, see nothing in the circumstances of the times—in the progress of events, which indicated the approaching necessity of great constitutional changes? Did he see nothing to convince him that it was prudent to anticipate popular demands, and by timely and moderate concessions to avert the necessity for dangerous innovations? If he did not, let him forgive the fallible judgment of others on other questions, and put a charitable construction on their blindness. Nay, if the noble lord was perfectly justified in his strenuous opposition to reform up to the death of Mr. Canning, and in his strenuous support of it after the accession of Earl Grey—if some sudden unforeseen contingency, not within the scope of human foresight (such as the revolution in France of 1830), justified and demanded this change of opinion on the part of the noble lord, I may feel, as I do feel, convinced of the purity of his motives; but I feel, also, that harsh and intolerant criticisms on the versatile opinions of others proceed with a very bad grace from the noble lord. The noble lord said, that when the great question of reform was carried, it was clearly necessary to adopt new principles of commercial policy. Sir, I deny that the necessity for liberal principles of commercial policy originated with the change in the representation of the people. I deny altogether that the adoption of these principles originated with parliamentary reform. Mr. Huskisson and others entered into these views of commercial policy, and practically enforced them. You cannot date the relaxation of restrictions, and the abolition of monopoly, from the period at which parliamentary reform took place. For ten years previously to the Reform Bill, more important changes were effected in our commercial policy than for the ten years succeeding that epoch. But if you are right—if from parliamentary reform there arose the necessity for commercial improvements—if that be true, then the noble lord passes the most severe censure on those to whom the Reform Bill gave political power. They were strong in power; they were convinced of the truth of certain documents; they were convinced that the practical application of them was necessary to the public interest, and yet they let their principles lie dormant, without an effort to awaken them. Nay, more, according to your own showing, the combination of circumstances, and the nature and necessary consequences of great constitutional changes, enforced the policy of immediate action. In respect of commercial reform, doctrines abstractedly and universally true, doctrines suited to all times and to all circumstances, came specially recommended by the character of those times, and the special nature of those circumstances; and yet, with every advantage, you, who were convinced of certain truths, who were able to enforce them, who were powerful enough to trample down all opposition (the complexion of the times and the fortuitous concurrence of events proclaiming to you that the time for action had arrived), you did nothing to advance the cause of commercial reform. And then, when the time had passed away, when you were in the hour of dissolution, like sorry penitents you remembered, in the days of your decay, the principles you had forgotten or neglected in the time of your strength; and you threw discredit on the principles themselves, by trying to make them subservient, not to the promotion of the public weal, but to the rescue of a tottering administration. Nay, at an earlier period, when your power began to fail, when the public began to withdraw their confidence, when there might still have been a decent adoption of a liberal commercial policy, you did not invoke its aid for your deliverance. It was not till your days were numbered, when it was convenient to yourselves that you should appear martyrs in the cause of free-trade, that you demonstrated any zeal in the enforcement of its principles. The noble lord taunts us with the support of the Bonded Corn Bill, and exults in the passing of it as a tardy triumph of the principles of the late government. Did that government propose the bill? Did that government, as a government, lend a cordial support to the measure when it was introduced in 1836 or 1837? When Mr. Robinson, the member for Worcester, first introduced the measure, when he asked in 1835 merely for a committee to inquire into the policy of admitting bonded corn into consumption, was not that motion actually opposed by the late government? Then the sugar duties. When did you become converts to the policy of admitting foreign sugar at a

low rate of duty? Was it not at the very period when you had lost all power and authority in this House? In 1841, you proposed the admission of foreign sugar; you ridiculed the arguments of those who opposed it; you could see nothing but hypocrisy in the motives of those who feared that the admission of foreign sugar, without the attempt to make stipulations in respect to slavery, might encourage the slave trade, and aggravate the horrors of slavery. You had no mercy on your opponents in 1841. But in 1839, when it was proposed that the duties on foreign sugar should be reduced from 63s. to 34s. per cwt., when every argument on which you subsequently relied was adduced in favour of the proposal—you opposed the reduction of duty. When the price of sugar was unusually high, you opposed it with all the weight of the government; you rejected it by a majority of 122 to 27; and you assigned as your reason for opposing the reduction that you could make no distinction between sugar, the produce of slave-labour, and sugar the produce of free-labour, and that you were unwilling to inundate the British market with sugar the produce of slave-labour. Now I ask you, in return for the question of the noble lord, when did you become proficient in the doctrines of Adam Smith and Ricardo? Did you become their disciples before that day, when the profession of their principles might possibly save your administration, or, if that were impossible, might diminish the discredit of your failure? The noble lord has professed to review some of the principal measures of the session. He began with those announced in the speech from the throne—the alterations in the tariff, and in the corn and provision laws. He would insinuate, that I have deluded my supporters by the extent and importance of the alterations which have been made in those laws. Is that the charge which the noble lord prefers? From one section of his supporters I have uniformly heard a very different one; namely, that the alteration in the Corn-laws is not important and not extensive—that there has been certainly deception and delusion; but deception and delusion practised, not on the agricultural interest, but on the great body of consumers—that the present Corn-law is no better than the old one, and that the admission of foreign cattle and foreign meat will be of no practical advantage. These charges cannot both be true; and, in fact, both are without foundation. I have deceived no one. I have adopted no principles of government which I did not profess in opposition. When in opposition was I not constantly told that the support given to me was a reluctant and hollow support; that my supporters disapproved of my moderation, of my leanings towards commercial freedom? When I took office in 1835, did I not make a public declaration of the principles on which I should act? and in what particular have I departed from them in 1842? The noble lord says, that we were mistaken by our friends, and that the mistake was theirs; that we, during all the time of our opposition to the government, held good principles, but, holding them in silence, we astonished our friends when we avowed and acted upon them in office. We must, in truth, have held them, he says; for we could not, according to the Indian superstition, have inherited the principles, because we occupied the seats of our opponents. We did not find these good principles, says the noble lord, or the measures founded upon them, in the red boxes of the late ministers. No one can contest that truth. Never was an observation more just. There was not, I willingly admit, one trace left by the late government of their intentions with regard to the tariff. They may have been excellent, but we discovered no evidence of them. What right have they to plume themselves on the tariff? What particle of credit belongs to them for it? Did they appoint the Import Duties' committee? Did they attend that committee after it had been appointed? If public benefit has been derived from the evidence adduced before that committee, if the public mind has been prepared by the publication of that evidence for extensive changes in the commercial system of the country, let the credit be given where it is due. Let it be given to the member for Montrose and the member for Wolverhampton, and not to the late government, that merely stood by passive spectators, and coldly tolerated the appointment of a committee, the object of which was not avowed, and the result of whose labours they could not have foreseen. If they had, surely the President or Vice-president of the Board of Trade, or some member of the government holding a commanding situation, would have thought it worth his while to attend the committee. The noble lord has a defence for the inaction of the government in the later years of its existence, which he thinks quite triumphant. They were not

strong enough, it seems, to enforce their principles. They were controlled, overpowered, by their opponents. Then why did they retain office? Why did they tamely acquiesce in being controlled against their conviction—against their sense of what the public interest required? They knew what was right, but tolerated what was wrong.—What does this amount to? Simply this—that just so long as office could be held at all, they preferred the retention of office to the maintenance of their principles. Why did not they at an earlier period appeal to the people, in the legitimate way, for the support of good principles? Why did they not propose that which they believed to be right, and cast on parliament the responsibility of rejecting it? Why did they not even incur the risk of that alternative, horrible as it may have been, of losing office? I have a right to ask that question. Did I abandon the malt-tax, in 1835, because I was threatened with opposition from my supporters? No. I called them together; I told them the continuance of the malt-tax was essential to the maintenance of the public credit; that I would resist the repeal of it, and retire from office if I was beaten. I did resist the repeal effectually. I willingly admit that I received from those opposed to me in politics effective support in resisting it. It was cordially given; and why? because it was seen that I was in earnest, and was ready to make that sacrifice, the risk of which must be incurred on many occasions, before you can hope to mitigate opposition and conciliate support. In the late discussions on the tariff what confident expectations were entertained that I should be forced to yield! What chuckling there was about the import of salmon and of cattle! You thought I must yield. You heard of the exaggerated fears of the grazier, the forced sales of cattle at great loss; the rumours, the unfounded rumours probably, of combinations to oppose, of resolutions of lukewarm support, of staying away on critical divisions. Suppose I had followed the example of others; Suppose I had argued thus:—"These are serious indications; the welfare, nay, the existence of a conservative government is at stake; that is a vastly superior consideration to any amount of duty on foreign cattle; friends must be conciliated; there is no great difference between a duty by the head and a duty by weight; much may be said on both sides; it is the most prudent course to give way handsomely, and before a division." Suppose I had taken this course; suppose I had run no risk; should I have carried the tariff? should I have had your support in carrying it? that support which you gave cordially when you knew that I was in earnest, that I was resolved to deal justly with all interests, and to make no concession to groundless fears, or to any influence but that of reason? The noble lord claims for the late administration, or rather for his own share in it, the merit of having wonderfully extended the foreign commerce of the country. I watched the uneasiness of the member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) during the progress of the noble lord's demonstration on that head: his countenance fell wofully with every figure the noble lord quoted. The noble lord was showing that there had been a rapid increase in the trade of the country, all owing to the skill and wisdom of the late government; that the real value of the exports, which in 1832 were only £36,000,000, advanced in 1835 to £47,000,000, and in 1841 to £51,000,000. What, and all this under the old Corn-law! That law was in force during the whole period, and yet it either had no pernicious influence on our prosperity, or, if it had any, that influence was counteracted by the personal merits of the noble lord and his colleagues. But of this fact there can be no doubt—that the noble lord has proved that this wonderful progressive increase in the real value of our exports, and in the extension of our trade, took place concurrently at least with the Corn-laws. The noble lord's demonstration seemed to be so triumphant, that I took for granted he would conclude it with a condemnation of me for having disturbed the Corn-laws. Notwithstanding the variations in the price of corn, notwithstanding that wheat for four consecutive years averaged (I think) 47s., and for four other years 64s., the noble lord is ready with his proof that the price of corn had no influence on the amount of our exports. And the very men who were cheering the noble lord to-night, and exulting in his proofs, from figures, that trade has been progressively advancing for the last ten years under the fostering care of the wise government which had their support, have been maintaining night after night during the whole session, that the inferences to be drawn from these same figures are totally fallacious, and that our foreign trade has been progressively declining instead of advancing. The noble lord complains that certain

measures, which were recommended in the speech from the throne, have not passed into laws. He says, we have not proceeded with the ecclesiastical jurisdiction and the registration bills. We were prepared to proceed with them. There surely were no difficulties to deter us, after having overcome the obstacles in the way of those great measures which were connected with the finance and commerce of the country. But after the labour of the session the measures mentioned could not have secured proper attention. Was I not right in that expectation? Why, when the noble lord has been passing his panegyrics on his late colleagues and himself, where are they? Where have they been for the last month? Much of the important business of the session, after the completion of the three first great measures, has been carried on during that period. Perhaps we have made, indeed, too much haste in legislation, in our anxiety for securing practical improvements; but certainly there has been more of business done in the last month than was ever transacted before? And where have been the members of the late cabinet? What a decisive refutation is their absence of all the assertions of the noble lord! What a decisive mark of public confidence in opponents! Do I allege that the absence of such men, during all the press and sweat of parliamentary business, argues indifference to their public duties? No; but it argues entire, unqualified confidence in the government. They have left the noble lord (as was once said of another gentleman here)—

“The last rose of summer, all blooming alone,  
His lovely companions all wither'd and gone”—

left him “to waste his sweetness on the desert air;” with the injunction to “bottle up a great speech; no matter how thin the House, let it explode at the end of the session, lest we be utterly forgotten.” “Yes,” said the noble lord to his colleagues; “but am I to move a vote of want of confidence, or something expressive of distrust?” “Oh, no!” (said his colleagues) “follow the example of Colonel Sibthorpe, and move for returns which the most jealous and sensitive of ministers cannot find it in his heart to oppose; but, for heaven’s sake, don’t risk a division! Speak about America and Afghanistan, and every thing else; only avoid any motion which may provoke a division of three to one against us.” The noble lord must not charge me with ingratitude. I here publicly acknowledge my obligations to the friends of the noble lord for their absence, implying as it does unbounded-confidence in us, a perfect assurance that we will not abuse our power, but diligently persevere in repairing their blunders. But surely their absence may account also for our reluctance to proceed with some of the measures to which the noble lord has referred. Could we proceed with propriety to amend the registration of electors, in the absence of the great luminary of reform? Were we to proceed with the Registration-bill, when he had left the Bribery-bill to its fate? Let us shortly review the progress of the Bribery-bill. We heard of enormous and universal corruption at elections, of compromises for the suppression of the proof of it. The necessity for instant reform was manifest. “Let us” (it was said earnestly on the other side,) “let us have a measure to shame these corrupters of public virtue.” I promised every assistance. Well, the first intimation I received was from the noble author of the bill, “I’m off.” Then the Attorney-general of the late government was to have charge of the bill—and in the eulogy pronounced on his eminent abilities I entirely concur; but soon it was “I’m off” with him also. Then the chairman of the committee, the member for Halifax, had charge of the bill; but he was off also, and was to be found, I believe, on the Continent. Then, at last, the bill came to the learned member for Liskeard, not a member of the committee; and certainly then I found it necessary to give that energetic support, which I often gave the late government to insure the passing of their measures. When the learned gentleman, with infantine simplicity, being called upon to defend the main clauses of the bill, piteously looked round, and said, “I suppose I must say something, but I’ve nothing to say.” I began to fear this measure was in danger of miscarriage when committed to such innocence, till at last the hon. member for Finsbury rose and said, “For God’s sake give up the bill to Sir R. Peel, for no one else can take charge of it!” Now if other proof of confidence were wanting, what say you to this? Flesh and blood would never have deserted this bantling, had it not been for the unbounded confidence that its life would be watched over by me with parental care, after it had



been abandoned by its natural protectors. The noble lord observed with a sneer, that there was one measure, indeed, which we did pass, namely, the Income-tax. Yes, and why did we propose it? Why did we call upon the country to submit to a tax so unpopular and obnoxious? and why did the country respond to the call? because they acknowledged the truths which night after night I sedulously impressed upon their mind; that you, the late government, having alienated France, having done nothing to improve our relations or adjust our differences with the United States, with a lowering prospect in Europe and in America, had undertaken three wars at a great distance from your resources, had been carrying on simultaneously war in Syria, war with China, war in Afghanistan; that you had at the same time contrived to make your annual revenue fall short of your expenditure by £2,500,000, and had an accumulated deficiency of £10,000,000, on comparing the revenue with the expenditure of the last five years. These facts sunk deep into the public mind, and resistance to the Income-tax was hopeless. But where were you (Lord Palmerston) during the discussions on the Income-tax? How happens it that you were a silent looker-on? This was the greatest financial measure of recent times, a measure, if not imposed by some overruling necessity, the most open to objection? You, who for many years have been in the service of the Crown, and taken a leading part in public business, and in the debates of this House, maintained absolute silence while night after night the bill was under discussion; and now that it is safe, now that it is passed into a law, you discharge your puny popgun against the Income-tax. Is this creditable conduct? How is it to be accounted for? Is this the solution? Is it true that you and your colleagues had at first resolved to support the Income-tax? Is it true that you met together in private conference, and that you took the resolution manfully to support the bill? that your first generous impulse was not to thwart vigorous measures for replenishing an exchequer which had been exhausted through your own mismanagement? and that you afterwards yielded to the remonstrance of some of your supporters, and determined to oppose measures which your own unbiassed sense of duty would have inclined you to support? The noble lord complains that the bankruptcy and lunacy bills were postponed in the House of Lords till a late period of the session. No doubt they were. I have been informed—however, I cannot vouch for the fact—but I have been credibly informed, that the late lord-chancellor, Lord Cottenham, expressed a wish that the bankruptcy and lunacy bills should be postponed until the county courts bill should be ready for discussion, in order that they might be all considered together, and that that has been the cause of the delay. Both by the bankruptcy act, and the lunacy act, a great improvement in the law has been made, and we were unwilling to defer the passing of them, seeing that all parties were generally agreed as to the principle at least, of these acts. We have passed a measure respecting ecclesiastical leases, which will contribute to the improvement of property and to the efficiency of the Established Church. But the amount of what we have done will, thanks to the noble lord, be laid on the table of the House; it will become matter of record, and when any impartial man shall consider it, if he be possessed of a generous spirit, he will make allowance for what has been left undone, and give us credit for what we have effected. As the noble lord has said, those only who have been in office can have any idea of the enormous amount of duty that is connected with it. The number of despatches that are received from every quarter of the globe, and which a minister must of necessity read, in addition to his other labours, would alone suffice to convince any one desirous of forming a correct judgment on the subject, how difficult it is for a public man to reconcile the performance of his duties in the House of Commons with the conduct of official affairs. The noble lord might, therefore, have readily found in his own official experience an excuse for us, if, on entering office, we required three or four months to digest our plans, and consider what steps we should take to relieve the country from its financial embarrassment. The noble lord has referred to the state of the country, and he has to-night, as on former occasions, made use of language which is calculated to aggravate dissatisfaction. He says,—“You are about to let parliament separate without, after all your labours, having done any thing to relieve the existing distress. I trust parliament will be soon called together again in order that you may deliberate upon measures for rescuing the country from its difficulties.”

I was in hopes that the noble lord, when he had tendered his advice for the

summoning of parliament, was about to accompany that advice with the intimation of his opinion, as to the measures to be adopted; but all that fell from the noble lord was the perfectly safe, but not very useful declaration,—“Something or other must be done.” The noble lord proceeded to review the whole of the foreign policy of the country, but found it very difficult to introduce his reference to it on this miserable motion about the names and titles of the bills which we have passed in the present session. The noble lord fortunately recollected that my noble friend (Lord Stanley) made a speech three months since, in which there was some mention of the mischievous activity of the noble lord; and after three months’ deliberation the noble lord comes forward with his vindication from the charge of my noble friend. The noble lord paid a compliment to my noble friend for his skill in off-hand debate: I apprehend that compliment cannot be reciprocated to the noble lord, in replying to my noble friend after a lapse of three months. The noble lord began by a statement which I feel it wholly unnecessary to dwell upon, because it received its best confutation in a burst of incredulous laughter. The noble lord said that we have done nothing but avail ourselves of the facilities in foreign affairs which were bequeathed to us by our predecessors. The noble lord’s first reference was to the question of Hill Coolies, but I will pass by that, as belonging rather to the colonial department. If my noble friend should think it worth while to defend his conduct from the attack which the noble lord, after three months’ preparation has made, with reference to the Hill Coolies, I have no doubt that my noble friend will be able most satisfactorily to do so without the advantage of quite so much premeditation. But surely before the noble lord is so severe upon an opponent, to whom he imputes a change of opinion respecting the importation of Hill Coolies into the Mauritius, he would do well to take a retrospective view of the various ministers of all shades of political opinions with whom he has been connected in the course of his own political life, and in that review he might find a charitable excuse for the public man who sees reason to modify in a slight degree his opinions about the Hill Coolies. As regards the foreign policy of the noble lord, no one can estimate more than I do the noble lord’s personal activity and attention to business. But when the noble lord refers to certain treaties with the state of Texas, and to six or seven treaties about the slave-trade, as the triumphs of his administration, I am induced to ask if those are points to which a minister, taking a comprehensive view of the foreign policy of the country, can refer with pride and confidence as the result of several years of official labour? Look to the great countries of the world with which it was your boast to be connected. For six years your constant boast in this House was, that you had formed and consolidated the alliance of Western Europe, a powerful confederacy, based on the community of material interests, as well as of political opinions. The influence of despotic power in the East was to be counterbalanced by the intimate union of states in the West, governed by liberal institutions. Proud of the co-operation of France, you forgot your professed repugnance to intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries, and took an active part in the civil dissensions of Spain, for the purpose of consolidating the great bulwark of constitutional liberty—the quadruple alliance. What has become of the French alliance? What were your relations with France when you relinquished office in 1841? When you assumed it in 1830, you found every facility for improving a good understanding with that country. The government of the Duke of Wellington had recognised the dynasty of Louis Philippe, and had conciliated the good-will of France, by the unhesitating acknowledgment of the right she had recently exercised in respect to the change of the reigning family. For five or six years after your accession to power, your great boast in respect to foreign policy was, the establishment of amicable relations with France. All the aid we on this side of the House could lend you to confirm these amicable relations, was repeatedly and cordially given. How stand those relations now? By whose fault is it that they have been interrupted? You congratulated us on the maintenance of peace, and on the extension of that commercial intercourse which is the offspring of peace, and the great instrument for allaying international jealousies. Your policy has not been thwarted by the hostile feelings of this country towards France. This country has no feeling of hostility towards France. It was but the other day that we heard of the lamentable death of the Duke of Orleans, the heir to the

throne of France, with a deep and universal regret and sympathy. We have no hostile, no irritable feeling towards France, neither have we any fear; we are too proud, to conscious of our own strength, to regard the power of France with apprehension; but we deprecate, for the interests of humanity, the interruption of friendly relations with that country. Our wish is to enter into no rivalry with France but rivalry in the generous race of increasing civilisation and social improvement. So far from viewing with jealous eyes the advances that may be made by France in the career of that civilisation and improvement, we know they will react upon and stimulate our own. Seeing that these are the genuine feelings of this country—seeing that the animosities, the relics of former hostilities, were fast subsiding, that the vulgar feeling of assumed superiority over France was supplanted by a kinder and more generous impulse—seeing all the advantages which the noble lord had for improving the friendly relations with France, for effecting that which he professed to be the great object of his policy, and the great guarantee for European peace—seeing all these things, how does the noble lord account for his signal failure? He complains of the non-ratification of treaties by France, and of her delay in admitting our just claims; and his complaints are just; but these things are the consequences of that alienation, of that state of irritable feeling, which, either through the fault or the misfortune of the noble lord, have been the consequences of his policy. The noble lord thinks it was necessary to incur the risk of rupture with France, in order to maintain the independence and integrity of the Turkish empire. “True,” says the noble lord, “we have alienated France, but then we have re-established the authority of the Porte in Syria.” Syria, indeed;—this, no doubt, is one of the facilities in the conduct of foreign affairs bequeathed to us by the noble lord. You have delivered up Syria, not to the Porte, but to anarchy; and my firm belief is, that it was in the power of the noble lord to maintain every interest which England has with respect to Syria, every interest which the Porte has with respect to Syria, without the necessary disturbance of friendly relations with France. I proceed with the other comments of the noble lord. I regret that these charges and imputations are brought at this period of the session. I should have been content to depart in peace, without disturbing those feelings (free at least from any hostile spirit) which may subsist, after the labours and conflicts of the session, between political opponents. I deprecate the spirit in which the remarks of the noble lord were conceived, because it compels the disclosure, in our own defence, of what had better have been withheld for the present. But I will not be silent when such charges and imputations are made against us. I know the inconvenience to the public service of making premature revelations; but I cannot remain silent under unfounded imputations. First, then, with respect to the United States. I am sorry that the noble lord has tried (I trust that the attempt will not be successful) to defeat the settlement of a question between that government and this, which has remained unadjusted for the long period of forty years. Yes; for forty years this question of disputed boundary has been waiting for settlement. Seeing that we may be on the eve of effecting it, the noble lord does his best, by needless appeals to the sense of honour, to prevent it. Such is the blindness of his hostility, that every argument which he directs against our policy is the bitterest condemnation of his own conduct. He says, that subsequently to his appointment to office, he offered to acquiesce in an adjustment of this disputed question, which according to his own declarations, was fortunately rejected by the United States; fortunately, because it was most prejudicial to the interests of this country. He avows that he was ignorant of the merits of this question, that he had not sufficient local information—and defends on that ground his readiness to acquiesce in a settlement injurious to the honour and interests of his own country. What a wretched defence! What prevented the noble lord from making himself master of the merits of the question, and from procuring the local information which he required? The question had been in dispute for forty years. Why did not the noble lord, while he might have professed his earnest desire to adjust this matter, demand the time that was requisite for the correct understanding of it? The truth is, the noble lord fears that we have made an arrangement with the United States more favourable to our own interests than the one to which he was willing, at a former period, to assent; and in order

that he may dissatisfy the country with our arrangements, denounces his own, and declares that it was through ignorance and culpable neglect, that he was a party to them. It is unworthy of the noble lord to be now raising these difficulties in the way of an amicable adjustment of long-existing differences between this country and the United States,—between great communities, boasting a common origin, speaking a common language, whose interests are so closely interwoven, that a hostile blow, aimed by the one at the other, recoils upon the hand that strikes it. Considering the utter failure of the noble lord to remove the long-existing causes of misunderstanding between this country and the United States, he might at least abstain from throwing impediments in the way of others, from telling us that our honour is involved in maintaining our right to a swamp on the frontier; from counselling us to make no compromise, no concession; from inflaming the public mind in each country, until there is no alternative but war. Sir, I would not shrink from that alternative, did the honour of the country require its adoption. It was said, I think, by Mr. Fox, that the most legitimate ground of war was the necessary vindication of the honour of a country; that it rarely happened that where mere material interests were concerned, the cost of war was not greater (even in the case of success) than the value of the object in dispute. I confidently hope, however, that neither the vindication of honour, nor the maintenance of the just rights of this country, will impose upon us the necessity of an appeal to arms, but that there are the means, by a conciliatory adjustment of all differences with the United States, of maintaining honourable peace. The noble lord has referred to our recent discussion with the United States in respect to the right of search. He compliments us on the ability with which we have defended the claim put forth by this country with respect, not indeed to the right of search, but the right to ascertain the nationality of a vessel suspected of carrying on the slave-trade. He says, however, that we were only maintaining the position which he had previously taken, and enforcing arguments which he had previously used. There is, I presume, no ground of charge in this, if, for once, we thought the noble lord was in the right. He says, that my noble friend, the secretary of state for foreign affairs, conducted the discussion with much greater ability than he himself could have done; and in that observation, I cordially concur. It was not only with superior ability that my noble friend conducted this discussion, but he contrived to reconcile firmness with moderation and dignity, and abstained from offensive and petulant remarks which sink deep into the mind of a sensitive people. My noble friend did not think it essential to the argument to talk of a piece of bunting when speaking of the American flag. I follow the noble lord to Portugal. He says, that the negotiations which we have concluded with Portugal has been pending for five or six years. So it has. It stood in the same position that all the great questions with foreign countries have been left by the noble lord; it stood in the same position that the questions with the United States stood; that is to say, no effectual progress had been made by the noble lord towards their settlement. A vast number of diplomatic notes have been interchanged, all ably penned, I have no doubt, but there was no prospect of immediate and amicable adjustment. So hopeless was it, that the noble lord introduced a bill, which passed into a law, enabling the cruisers of this country to capture the slave-trading vessels of Portugal. The act may have been justifiable, but it was a proof that all hope of friendly negotiation with Portugal was abandoned by the noble lord. We have prevailed with Portugal; by the means of friendly negotiation we have replaced our relations with that country (the intimate and ancient ally of England) on the basis of friendship, and have been enabled to repeal the act of the noble lord, which was, in point of fact, little less than a declaration of war. Now, with respect to the treaties which the noble lord boasts of having concluded, I will give the House a specimen of the candour and generosity which the noble lord has exercised in the attack he has made upon us. The noble lord referred to the treaty between the Porte and the five powers, and told us that he was content, so little has he of assurance, so little does he wish to arrogate any thing to himself, that he was content to call this treaty, a treaty for the provisional closing of the Dardanelles; but that we, in magnificent language, had termed the same treaty, a treaty for securing the peace of Europe. I will read the language of the speech from the Throne, at the commencement of this session, in which her Majesty speaks of this treaty. Her

Majesty says,—“There shall also be laid before you a treaty which I have concluded with the same powers (the Emperor of Austria, the king of the French, the king of Prussia, and the Emperor of Russia,) together with the Sultan, having for its object the security of the Turkish empire, and the maintenance of the general tranquillity.”

Those were the terms in which we advised her Majesty to describe the objects of the treaty in question—exaggerated and inflated terms, says the noble lord, assigning to this treaty an importance which its modest authors never claimed for it. How stands the fact? I will now read the preamble to this very treaty, and leave the House to judge of the fairness of the noble lord's comments, and the justice of the compliment which he has paid to his own humility. The parties to the treaty (being all enumerated) state that, “Being persuaded that their union and agreement offer to Europe the most certain pledge for the preservation of the general peace, the constant object of their solicitude, and their said Majesties being desirous of testifying this agreement, by giving to the Sultan a manifest proof of the respect which they entertain for the inviolability of his sovereign rights, as well as of their sincere desire to see consolidated the repose of his empire, agree,” &c.

Compare this preamble, setting forth the objects of the treaty, with our description of the treaty in the Speech from the Throne, and then say whether that description was erroneous, and whether it does not fall far short, in inflation of language, of the noble lord's preamble. I cite this as a specimen of the noble lord's fairness and candour towards his opponents. Now, with respect to Hanover and the Stade-duties. Notwithstanding the remarks of the noble lord, I have no doubt, that when the negotiations with Hanover shall be laid on the table, this House will not consider that they are incompatible with the national honour, while at the same time they promote the commercial interests of this country. But the noble lord says,—“We, when we were in office, maintained that there was an obligation on Hanover to reduce the Stade-duties to 1-16th per cent. according to treaty.”

But, I ask, what did you do practically to relieve the commerce of this country from an oppressive imposition? You left us ten years' negotiations upon the subject—you sent commissioners; what came of all your negotiations and all the labours of your commissioners? When we came into office we found them suspended. We found not one single advance made towards a settlement, and the only point at issue, as it appeared, was, whether you should go to war with Hanover, or they should reduce the tolls to 1-16th per cent. That was the state of the case. But the noble lord would do well to observe a little more caution in his attacks on those who may not have been inclined in his opinion to maintain extreme rights, or the literal fulfilment of treaties of doubtful obligation. Did the noble lord ever hear of a memorandum on the subject of these duties, from which I will read an extract?

“Upon the whole, as it appears that these duties are injurious to British commerce, more from the unfair competition to which it is thereby exposed from that of Ham-burgh, which is relieved from this charge, and still more from the vexation, the disputes, and the consequent delay attending its exaction, than from the pecuniary amount of the burden; whilst, on the other hand, the government of Hanover reaps no amount of revenue at all, comparable to the injury which it imposes on our commerce; it appears that the most advisable course to follow would be to endeavour to negotiate with the government of Hanover for the final cession of these duties, in return for a pecuniary compensation.”

Let this reminiscence be a warning to the noble lord, and teach him the prudence of reflecting whether his charges may not be too indiscriminate, and affect others besides her Majesty's present government. As for the noble lord's insinuation, that we made concessions with respect to the Stade-duties, with a view of conciliating the favour of the King of Hanover, it is an unjust and unworthy one. We recognise no claim on the part of the King of Hanover to any other measure than that of justice. But, as I have before observed, these are not the considerations which are to influence us in pronouncing judgment on the policy of the noble lord. He may boast of his slave-trade treaties, and of his new consulships, nay, of the facilities he has given for the importation of Mocha coffee. But what compensation is this for unfriendly relations with France and America? The noble lord says he has preserved peace. Peace, indeed! With three wars carried on at the same time—with a revenue deficient by £2,500,000, with every difference with the United States

unadjusted, the friendly relations with France converted into irritation and hostility, the noble lord complacently talks about the blessings and prospects of peace, about the facilities which he left to his successors for the conduct of foreign affairs! He says we have been subsisting since we entered office, on the broken meats which we found in the larder of the late government. What a just, though not very dignified illustration of the policy of his friends! The noble lord reserved for the climax of his speech, the happy topic of Afghanistan. He is displeased with my remarks the other night on his assurance. I certainly did say, and I retain the opinion, that it required a degree of incredible assurance to congratulate this country on the admirable position which the late government had secured in Afghanistan. It is more than assurance; it is a cruel mockery of the public feeling—after the lamentable events at Cabul, after the massacre of the garrison of Ghuznee, after the evacuation of every position, except that of Candahar, after the dreadful sacrifice of life and waste of treasure—for a minister, responsible for these things, to boast in the House of Commons of our admirable position in Afghanistan. The noble lord presumes much on my forbearance. He knows that considerations of public duty, that the fear of compromising public interests, prevent me from giving him the proper reply. He knows that the lapse of six weeks will convey to the scene of action any declarations that I may make with regard either to the operations of war, or to political or diplomatic transactions that may be in progress. The noble lord may throw out his imputations for the present with perfect safety. Whatever may be my feelings with regard to their injustice, whatever my inclination to retort on the noble lord, to expose the real truth with respect to the operations beyond the Indus, and the policy which led to them, I will not be betrayed into a remark which might injuriously affect the progress of pending negotiations, or compromise the safety of a single man employed in retrieving that disastrous policy. It is easy for the noble lord to dictate in the House of Commons campaigns upon the Indus, to insist upon the advance to this place, and the relief of that. The men who are on the spot, who are responsible for consequences, have other considerations to attend to, besides the map of the Indus. Does the noble lord know how many beasts of burden accompanied the army which he sent into Cabul? He may form some estimate of the number sent by the amount of the loss. Does the noble lord, when, without reference to seasons, to means of conveyance, to means of subsistence for an army, he talks so flippantly of advances into the heart of Afghanistan, does he know, that of the camels sent with the army under Sir John Keane, 26,000 perished before that army entered Cabul? What number remained I know not; but the absolute loss of camels accompanying the army, and employed in the transport of its stores and provisions, was 26,000. And the noble lord exclaims with indignation, "Who is the man that meditated the evacuation of Afghanistan, and the abandonment of our glorious policy in respect to that country?" Oh, I could tell the noble lord—I could tell him who is the man that meditated the evacuation of Afghanistan. I could give him another lesson on the imprudence and rashness of provoking answers to questions that imply misconduct on the part of his opponents. But I must be silent. The events that are passing—the death of our faithful ally, Shah Soojah, the king for whose restoration we have made such costly sacrifices—our altered relations, and the negotiations that have been entered into, in consequence of that death, impose upon me the obligation of silence, and prevent me for the present from giving to the noble lord the information he requires about the abandonment of his policy in Afghanistan—of that policy which, according to the noble lord, is to open to us new fields of commercial enterprise, by exhausting in war our own resources, and those of the countries with which we are to deal. The noble lord may have taught the barbarians on the Indus the true maxims of commercial policy, he may have inculcated upon them, at the point of the sword, the doctrines of Adam Smith and of Ricardo; but he has, at the same time, so exhausted and impoverished the country, that they cannot turn to account, either for their benefit or our own, the lessons they have received from him in political economy. Sir, I have done. I have attempted to reply in succession to the charges which the noble lord has preferred against the government. I deny the truth of the imputation that we have acted in office upon principles which we did not profess in opposition. Our commercial policy has been in conformity with that upon which the measures of Mr. Huskisson were founded, and which

measure received from me, one of the colleagues of Mr. Huskisson, a uniform and cordial support. I stated on the passing of the Reform Bill—I stated in 1835, in 1840, what were the principles on which I should act if called upon to take office. And in what respect have I departed from the professions which I made? You told me last year that I must be an instrument in the hands of others, and that the power was denied to me of enforcing my own principles. I declared then, as I declare now, that I consider office—its power, its distinction, its privileges—as nothing worth, except as the instrument of effecting public good. If it is to be held by sufferance, if it can be retained only on the condition of abandoning my own opinions and obeying the dictates of others, it will not be held by me. My reward for all the sacrifices it entails, is the prospect of that honourable fame which can only be attained by steadily pursuing the course which, according to the best conclusions of our fallible judgment, we honestly believe to be conducive to the welfare of the country. These are the motives by which we are actuated, these are the rewards to which we aspire. What could induce my noble friend who sits beside me (Lord Stanley)—what could induce him, with his intellectual powers, with all the buoyancy of youth, with all his command of the enjoyments of life and his taste for its rational pleasures,—what could induce him to submit to the drudgery of office, to the toil of nightly attendance here, to the devotion of every faculty of mind and body to public duty,—what could induce him to submit to all this, but, first, the possession of an unfettered right to act on the impulse of his own conscientious judgment, and, secondly, the aspirations after that honourable fame which will be adjudged to those who exhaust their strength in the faithful and honest discharge of great public trusts? It is not by subserviency to the will of others, it is not by the hope of conciliating the temporary favour of majorities, that such fame can be acquired; and in spite of all the noble lord has said, in spite of the rumours he has heard of concealed dissatisfaction among our supporters, we have the proud satisfaction of knowing that we retain their confidence, while we claim for ourselves the privilege of acting on our own opinions. From the commencement of the session to its close, we have received that generous support which has enabled us to overcome every difficulty, to carry triumphantly every measure we have proposed. There may have been shades of difference, there may have been occasional dissatisfaction and complaint; but I have the firm belief that our conduct in office has not abated one jot of that confidence on the part of our friends, which cheered and encouraged us in the blank regions of opposition; and next to the approval of our own conscience, and to the hope of future fame, the highest reward we can receive for public labours is their cordial support and their personal esteem.

Returns ordered; and, on the 12th of August, Parliament was prorogued till Thursday the 6th day of October.

## THE ADDRESS.

FEB. 2, 1843.

The Speaker having *reported* the lords commissioners' speech, and read it to the House,—Viscount Courtenay proposed, and Mr. Miles seconded, the Address in reply.

SIR ROBERT PEEL:—I am happy, Sir, to infer from the general tone of the speech of the hon. member who has just addressed you (Mr. C. Wood), and from the spirit in which the speech was received by those who generally concur in opinion with him, that there is every prospect of an unanimous vote on the Address in answer to her Majesty's Speech. I listened to the hon. gentleman's speech, and particularly to that portion of it which referred to the foreign policy pursued by this country, with great satisfaction. It appeared to me, that the hon. gentleman was willing to afford his unqualified approbation to the policy which governed the conduct of ministers with respect to foreign affairs generally; and the only reserve he made referred to the conduct of the government in relation to those districts west of the Indus. I concur with the hon. gentleman in the observations which he has made respecting the great skill and ability with which the military operations were carried on in India, and the constancy and valour of the troops engaged in executing them; and I also

concur in the justness of the remark that these will be more properly brought under our view when the notice upon the books calls the attention of the House more particularly to the subject. That will be the more becoming season to enter upon such a subject; and for that reason, I shall not at present dwell upon it. The hon. gentleman, in referring to that portion of the Queen's Speech which alludes to the treaty lately concluded between this country and the United States, for the regulation of the boundary question between Canada and the state of Maine, said very truly, that the possession of a few hundred square miles of territory, more or less, was of little importance compared to the adjustment of differences which had now existed for nearly half a century between two great nations—differences which, from their long continuance, and from their peculiar nature, were calculated, unless speedily and definitively adjusted, to leave but little hope that peace could be preserved between the two nations. I was glad to hear the hon. gentleman's frank admission with respect to the settlement of the boundary question, and I feel satisfied that I shall be able, when the occasion offers, to show the House that the country is under great obligations to the noble lord by whom that adjustment has been effected. That noble lord had almost retired from the turmoil of public life; but, influenced by a high sense of public duty, he abandoned the repose of private life, and quitted his country to enter upon the task in which he so happily succeeded. I could show, if the policy of that noble lord had been called in question in this House, as it has been out of doors, that the treaty which was effected by him affords to this country every thing which can be considered essential to the security of our North American possessions—not perhaps as much as we were justly entitled to, and had a right to expect; but, considering the uncertainty attached to the interpretation of the old treaty, considering the great length of time which had since elapsed, taking into account that the geography of the country was in a great degree unknown at the time of first assigning the boundaries, and considering the difficulty, not to say the impossibility, of exactly ascertaining the intentions of those by whom the assignment was made, we should feel satisfied to accept, not, it is true, all that we claim, or all that we are entitled to, but such a division of the disputed district as secures our British possessions in North America, and at the same time preserves our military communication uninterrupted. The adjustment of the question by Lord Ashburton is far more favourable to this country than that formerly proposed by the King of the Netherlands, and in which we were willing to concur. It should be remembered that since the interference of the King of the Netherlands a fresh difficulty was added, by the occupation of a portion of the territory in dispute; and, in 1839, the hostile parties had almost come into conflict upon it. This being the case, I feel that I shall be fully enabled, if the policy of the late treaty be called into question, to show, that not only the honour, but the interests of the country have been carefully provided for. In America, as here, there are parties trying to obstruct the treaty. Mr. Webster is taunted in America because he receded from his extreme position when he saw there was no other way of coming to an amicable settlement. Here the treaty is called the Ashburton capitulation, there the Webster capitulation, but I hope the good sense of both countries will recognize the policy of relinquishing extreme pretensions which could not have been maintained without endangering the continuance of peace. No other advantage is to be compared to an amicable settlement between two nations of kindred origin, of kindred language, and of interests as kindred as their origin and language. I rejoice that the hon. gentleman has given me an opportunity of making some observations on the late message of the President of the United States. The sincere and honest desire I have always entertained for the maintenance of a good understanding between this country and the United States, and the spirit in which I have always spoken of America, makes it a doubly painful duty to me to have to refer to that message, which, I am sorry to say, does not give a correct account of the negotiations relative to the right of visit. Perhaps I may do right to confirm what the hon. gentleman has said, that there is nothing more distinct than the right of visit and the right of search. Search is a belligerent right, and not to be exercised in time of peace, except when it has been conceded by treaty. The right of search extends not only to the vessel, but to the cargo also. The right of visit is quite distinct from this, though the two are often confounded. The right of search, with respect to American vessels, we



entirely and utterly disclaim; nay, more, if we knew that an American vessel were furnished with all the materials requisite for the slave-trade—if we knew that the decks were prepared to receive hundreds of human beings, within a space in which life is almost impossible, still we should be bound to let that American vessel pass on. But the right we claim is, to know whether a vessel pretending to be American, and hoisting the American flag, be *bona fide* American. We claim the right to know whether a grievous wrong has not been offered to the American flag; to know, for instance, whether a Portuguese or Brazilian schooner, sailing under the American flag be really what she seems to be. In the admirable despatch of my noble friend, dated the 20th of December, 1841, he wrote thus:—"The undersigned apprehends, however, that the right of search is not confined to the verification of the nationality of the vessel, but also extends to the object of the voyage, and the nature of the cargo. The sole purpose of the British cruisers is to ascertain whether the vessels they meet with are really American or not. The right asserted has, in truth, no resemblance to the right of search, either in principle or in practice. It is simply a right to satisfy the party, who has a legitimate interest in knowing the truth, that the vessel actually is what her colours announce."

I am surprised the United States should contest this, considering the many small states by which they are surrounded, and how easily their revenue might be injured if it could once be established as a principle that a foreign vessel might become exempt from visitation by hoisting any particular flag. With such a principle recognised, neither the revenue nor the commerce of the United States could be safe for an instant. But I know that the United States do liberally exercise this right in the seas adjacent to their own coast; I know that if a Mexican vessel were to hoist the British flag under suspicious circumstances, the United States would not hesitate to exercise the right of exposing the fraud; and, knowing this, I am the more surprised at the claim now set up by the President of the United States. Therefore, Sir, it will be my duty, in the face of the public, expressing deep regret that there should appear to be any difference of opinion on this topic, explicitly to declare that we have not waived one of the principles contended for by my noble friend (the Earl of Aberdeen) in his despatch of December 1841; and it is further my duty to declare that that despatch has remained to the present hour unanswered by the government of the United States. I know, I think, too well, what is the ability, and what the keenness of a Secretary of State in the United States, to believe that if doctrines so important as those advanced in the despatch could be questioned, it would have been permitted to remain fourteen months unanswered and unacknowledged, had it been thought wise to contest those principles. And, Sir, with respect to this right of search, that not belligerent but conventional right which is used by one power for the purposes of humanity, to check the traffick in slaves, I am bound to say that, even on that point, I am surprised at the determination with which the United States refuse that mutual right. I am now speaking of that right of search which, by the treaties which the great powers of Europe, by treaty with France and other states, is mutually conceded by parties desiring to prevent effectually the traffic in slaves—a right to search vessels belonging to each country which is a party to the treaty, detected in the act of carrying on this trade. For, in the year 1824, a convention was signed in this country, by Mr. Rush, the minister of the United States, almost at the instigation of America, which professed the utmost desire to put an end to the slave-trade. A convention, I say, was signed by Mr. Rush and Mr. Huskisson, which did mutually concede the right of search; that is to say, which enabled vessels of war, of the United States and Great Britain respectively, to exercise, under certain stipulations, that very right of search against which such a clamour is now raised in a neighbouring country. That treaty was rejected by the senate of the United States, not on the ground of an objection to the right of search, but because the right of search extended to the coast of America, and the United States objected to the right of search being exercised in the immediate neighbourhood of the coast of America, alleging that it was not necessary for the suppression of the slave-trade. The senate of the United States omitted the coast of America, and Mr. Canning refused to ratify the treaty in consequence of that omission; but if Mr. Canning had allowed the coast of America to be omitted from the treaty, at this moment a convention authorising the

right of search would have been in force with respect to the United States. Sir, I hope that those who have contended with so much vehemence in the legislative chamber of France against the maintenance of treaties framed in the pure spirit of humanity, and who quote the example of the United States, will refer to that convention, and see that the United States themselves were among the first to permit that conventional right of search. There must be some great misunderstanding upon this subject; but, considering the importance of maintaining this right—a right not peculiar to England—considering that we are contending for a right which is the only security against fraud, against the grossest abuses by parties interested in this iniquitous traffic—considering that we are the advocates of a principle necessary for the interests and security of all maritime nations—it is my duty to state, in the face of the House of Commons, that the claim to that right of visitation contended for in the despatch of Lord Aberdeen has not been relinquished; that on this subject we made no concession whatever, and that to the principles laid down in the despatch of Lord Aberdeen we adhere at this moment. With respect to the treaty which we have entered into with the United States, in signing that treaty we consider that we have abandoned no right of visitation. We did not understand from the United States that they entered into that treaty with any engagement from us to abandon the right of visitation, which is not necessarily connected with the question of the slave-trade. We thought that it was a step in advance when the United States professed a readiness to detach a naval force to the coast of Africa, for the purpose of suppressing the slave-trade. We did not accept the detachment of that naval force as an equivalent for any right which we claimed; yet still we thought that for a great country like the United States to take that step with us on the coast of Africa, although the power of visitation is limited under the treaty in such case, although we claim no right to visit slavers which are *bond fide* American, and the right is to be exercised by vessels of the United States—we thought it, I say, a step in advance towards the ultimate suppression of the slave-trade to accede to the proposition of the United States. But in acceding to that we have not abandoned our claims in the slightest degree, nor did it ever make any part of our intention, during the controversy, to abandon the right to which we lay claim in the despatch I have mentioned. We have not contented ourselves, Sir, with leaving this fact to become known by a declaration in this House; for, since the appearance of the President's message we have taken an opportunity of intimating to the United States the construction we place on the treaty. I trust, Sir, that I have said enough to satisfy the House on this point; I trust also, that although compelled to avow a material difference of opinion between the two governments upon this particular question, I have stated this difference of opinion with the respect which I wish to maintain towards the high authorities of the United States. Sir, I do not recollect that any other question of foreign policy was adverted to by the hon. gentleman; but he commented, in the course of his observations, on the state of the public revenue. I am quite ready to admit that the present appearance of the revenue is most unsatisfactory, and the hon. gentleman said he hoped there would be produced, or, if there were not produced, that he himself would call for it, a balance sheet, which would demonstrate that fact. Now, I tell the hon. gentleman at once that when he gets possession of that document his prediction will be fully verified; I tell him that that document will present a most unfavourable appearance; but I think he will admit that nothing would be more unjust or unfair than to infer the future state of the revenue, and its future prospects, from what shall appear on the face of that document. In the course of the last session I stated that there was then a great deficiency, on comparing the revenue with the expenditure. I stated also that I proposed to create a new deficiency, that I proposed to remit, or at least, to reduce duties which formed a very important source of revenue, the import duties on many articles which were the elements of manufactures in this country, and on many articles of general consumption which were productive in point of revenue. The article of timber, and others almost equally important, were included; and altogether I believe that a reduction was effected on 700 out of 1,100 articles comprehended in the tariff. That reduction of duty, too, took place at an early period of the financial year; in some instances from July last, in others, from October. Of course, the reduction of duty taking place at an early

period of the year, had a very material effect in increasing the deficiency of the revenue; and the taxes which were imposed by parliament for the purpose of supplying that deficiency, the income-tax especially, has not yet been productive. At least, they had not by any means come fully into operation. I do not know, then, that the present moment affords us very safe grounds for judging of our financial prospects; but at any rate it would be most unfair to draw discouraging inferences at a conjuncture when all the reductions have taken effect, while the receipts which were calculated upon to make up for the deficiency have not yet come to hand. Sir, the hon. gentleman states, and states truly, with respect to the excise, that that branch of income has been most unproductive. That is quite true. The excise has been unproductive, and it was thought advisable, in the speech from the Throne, at once to admit the fact—to admit it with deep regret, but candidly and at once. There can be no doubt that the reduction in the excise revenue has been in part caused by diminished consumption, which is an evidence of the depression of manufacturing industry and of the prevalence of general distress. It was thought proper at once to make that admission, but, at the same time, I wish to caution the House against drawing too unfavourable and gloomy inferences with respect to the fact of that reduction. I admit the diminution in the excise and in the taxes, but I think a great portion of the diminution must be attributed to the very unfavourable harvest of the year 1841. The defalcation in the revenue, it appears to me, has proceeded in a great degree from that source. I think the reduction on that account alone has not been less than £900,000. In the produce of the malt duties, and also of the spirit duties, there has been considerable diminution; but with respect to the latter, it is not to be ascribed altogether to distress, for improved habits of temperance are becoming more general here as well as in other countries, and there is a tendency to a diminished consumption of spirituous liquors as compared to former periods. But the great reduction in the excise has arisen from the reduced manufacture of malt, which is in a very great degree the consequence of the unfavourable harvest of 1841. I am not contesting the existence of distress, and I cannot allude to the subject without expressing the deepest regret, but at the same time do not misunderstand me. I wish to caution the House of Commons against drawing the unfavourable and gloomy inferences regarding our position. The hon. gentleman says, every thing is infinitely worse than it was five or six months ago; but at any rate he cannot deny that there has been a very great reduction in the price of all the chief articles of consumption. You say that the Corn-law has had nothing to do with this; but that was not the language of last year. You say it has not in the least checked the spirit of speculation, that corn was poured in just at the time when it would have been poured in before, and that the fact of the reduction of the price of grain is to be attributed, not to the operation of the new law but to a productive harvest last year. Now, the language I heard in June and July last was, that the harvest would certainly be unproductive; and the holders of corn were encouraged to keep back their stock by confident predictions that the harvest would be unfavourable, that the prospects it held out were extremely discouraging, and that, from information collected from very numerous sources, it was certain that the harvest of 1842 would be no better than that of 1841. Sir, I ventured to entertain different opinions, I cautioned the holders of corn against such advice, and recommended them to form no such conclusion. They however, kept back their corn, and certainly it cannot be denied but it was at one particular time thrown into the market in considerable quantities. But let the hon. gentleman rest assured that, whatever be the Corn-law, there will be, at a particular time, great speculation as to what the produce of the harvest will be; and when it is found that it will be abundant, depend on it that there will then be a tendency to introduce foreign corn, in order to secure a good price while the opportunity exists. There must be uncertainty in the price of an article, the production of which depends so much on the nature of the season, and which, of course, must greatly vary in quantity in different years. The hon. gentleman may depend on it that a great part of the evil which he attributes to the effects of the law passed last session will at one particular period always take place, because at that period there must be uncertainty as to the produce of the future harvest; but if the Corn holders last autumn kept back their corn, and then poured it in at a particular

moment, those gentlemen who assured them that the harvest would be unproductive are responsible for that result. Now with respect to the excise, I have a return of the duty on malt for the two last quarters of the year 1842, compared with the corresponding quarters of 1841. They are the only two quarters with which it is possible to institute a comparison. In the quarter ending in October, 1841, the quantity of malt made from barley, the produce of the crops of that year, was 376,000 bushels. In the October quarter of 1842, the number of bushels of malt amounted to 604,000. In the quarter ending in January, 1842, the number of bushels of malt was 8,951,000. In the last quarter ending January, 1843, it was 10,567,000. So that in the two last quarters of the present year, as compared with the same quarters of the preceding year, there has been an excess of 1,844,000 bushels. That is a conclusive proof of one or other of two things, either the consumption of malt has increased, or that an unproductive harvest very materially affects the revenue. In considering the financial deficiency of the year, therefore, I contend that a very large portion of it must be ascribed to the fact of a bad harvest. Sir, I do not think this a fit opportunity to enter into lengthened details on the subject of finance. Future opportunities of entering fully into that subject must occur, but when the hon. gentleman picks out the consumption of a particular period on which to ground an unfavourable representation of the case, I hope the House will not be led to draw a rash inference. I think I can show them in the state of the savings banks, circumstances corroborating the view I take of this matter. An extraordinary effect was produced in the withdrawal of deposits from these banks, by the disorders which prevailed in the autumn of last year. During the suspension of industry in the north, the amount withdrawn from the savings banks was very great, and we have conclusive proof in the state of the revenue, that the disorders contributed greatly to diminish consumption; but since they have ceased this is no longer the case, and deposits have increased, speaking generally of the savings banks, in the manufacturing districts. I know this is not conclusive, in showing the condition of mere artisans and mechanics, but at the same time inferences may be drawn from the amount of deposits in the savings banks, which negative, at least, that very unfavourable view of the position of the country which the hon. gentleman has taken. That distress still exists in many districts, and especially in parts of that country with which the hon. gentleman is connected, I admit, but I think there are indications of an increased consumption of some articles, which justify a hope, at least, that the physical condition of the people is now in some respects improving—a hope too encouraging not to be seized on with avidity if it rests on a solid foundation. The hon. gentleman asked what further measures I am prepared to introduce, in order to carry out the principles on which I, last session, declared my resolution to act. I stated, in explaining the measures then passed, the general principles which I thought ought to guide the commercial policy of this country; and I said that I thought we ought to give, as far as possible, new scope to commercial enterprise. To the principles then laid down I adhere; but when I stated them, I at the same time referred to the many complicated considerations which must be borne in mind when you attempt to introduce and apply principles, unquestionably sound, to a country such as this. Sir, I made in the course of last year, with the aid of my friends and colleagues in office, more extensive changes in the commerce of the country, and the code which regulates it, than were made at any former period. If I had contemplated any former immediate extensive changes, I would at once have proposed them, in the course of last session. Why should I not have done so? I stated the general principles on which I proceeded, and to those general principles I adhere, but I did not lead hon. gentlemen to expect that I would go on, year after year, introducing extensive changes. I thought it would be infinitely better, when I had made up my mind as to the changes which ought to be proposed, to propose them all in one year, than to propose only a certain number of them in that year, with the secret reservation in my mind of an intention to introduce more during the next. Whatever changes I propose will be in conformity, when I do propose them, with the general principles which I laid down, by which I am still guided, and of the truth of which I am perfectly convinced. But, as I said last year, at the time of my laying down these principles, I cannot forget that in this country protection has been the rule—that under it great and extensive interests have grown up, and

that if, in stating better principles, and substituting a better system for one that is defective, you proceed too hastily, if you produce distress in consequence of your beneficent efforts to introduce contentment and happiness, you run the risk of obstructing the free and rapid progress of those principles. It is, therefore, not in my power to assure the hon. gentleman that I have any great and extensive changes to propose in the commercial code of this country; when I do propose changes, they will be in conformity, as I have said, with the principles I laid down on former occasions; but I should be deceiving the hon. gentleman if I led him to expect in the present session any such extensive alterations as those at which he hints. Sir, I will not now enter into a vindication of the Corn-laws, or of the details of the course I pursued last session, with reference to the alteration then made; because an opportunity will probably be afforded by some gentleman who takes a different view of the subject from myself for discussing their operation and effects. It may be in the power of some hon. gentleman to adduce reason for believing that some better system ought to be enforced, but this I must say, that the event has proved that many of the arguments directed against that Corn-law which I proposed have not been fortified by experience. With respect to the alteration of the averages, for instance, it was confidently said, that the introduction of the new towns into the lists from which they were made up, would have the effect of lowering the price of corn, I think by 5s., and consequently increasing the duty. Now I shall be able to show that the introduction of the new towns has been an effectual corrective of fraud, but, at the same time, that it has not had the effect attributed to it by the hon. gentleman, and which he himself admitted that he overrated in the first instance. I certainly do remain of opinion that that law has not had a sufficient trial to warrant me in proposing the abrogation of it; I cannot say that I think the effect of it has been unfavourable, and I do not believe that the objections which have been urged by the hon. gentleman apply to it. Sir, when I introduced the Income-tax, I stated my firm conviction that the effect of the other laws I proposed would be to enable the party called upon to pay the tax to make a saving in his expenditure, equivalent to the sum which I should take from him for the Income-tax. My belief is, Sir, that that prediction has been fully verified, and that there has been a reduction of prices which does enable parties to make a saving in their expenditure, equivalent to the sum they will be called on to contribute in the shape of Income-tax. There will probably be other opportunities of discussing these important matters; but when I am asked to come forward and declare whether I contemplate extensive changes in the Corn-laws, I feel it right to avow that her Majesty's government have it not in contemplation to propose such extensive changes.

Motion agreed to, and a committee appointed to prepare the Address.

#### LORD ELLENBOROUGH.—GATES OF SOMNAUTH.

FEB. 9, 1843.

Mr. Vernon Smith moved for "A copy of any despatch from the Government of India to the Court of Directors, containing a proclamation addressed to the chiefs and princes of India, respecting the recovery of the gates of the temple of Somnauth, and any answer of the Court of Directors to the Governor-general of India."

SIR R. PEEL: Sir, when my hon. friend (Sir R. Inglis) calls upon me for an immediate expression of my opinion, and casts his censure upon me because I have not at once risen and announced my resolution not to defend this proclamation, I think he has not sufficiently adverted to the words, to the nature and object of this motion, or to the course pursued by the right hon. gentleman who is the mover of this question. I understood the right hon. gentleman to say, that if this motion were complied with, he should take a future opportunity of moving an address for the recall of the Governor-general of India [Mr. V. Smith: I have not expressed any such intention.] At all events, if the right hon. gentleman did not go so far, he admitted that he intended to found upon these papers a motion condemnatory of the conduct of Lord Ellenborough. The right hon. gentleman said, "I shall not

shrink from my duty, but, whatever others may do, I promise to give to the House an opportunity of declaring its condemnation of this proclamation." Now, I think it would have been more fitting if the right hon. gentleman had reserved his denunciations upon this subject until he had ascertained whether these papers would be granted, rather than make a motion of this kind, which he knew would be assented to, the occasion and the vehicle of that censure which he declared should be founded upon the very documents which he calls upon her Majesty's government to produce. It is against all parliamentary usage, and indeed against all usage whatever, to say, "Give me the evidence which I require, and, before I get that evidence I will proceed to pass judgment upon the person and the policy to impugn which this evidence is required." It must have become notorious from the speech of the right hon. gentleman, that he thought of course I should acquiesce in this motion, and he was therefore aware that the time would shortly come when he would have the opportunity of calling upon the House to join with him in a vote of condemnation upon the subject. I repeat, therefore, that I regret the right hon. gentleman, intending as he has himself declared, to invite this House to express its condemnation upon Lord Ellenborough, should have gone out of the way to vent his accusations before he was in possession of the evidence he desires to obtain by this motion. He asks for an official copy of this proclamation. Now, the government is not possessed in an official shape of any particulars of explanation tending to show Lord Ellenborough's motives and intentions in regard to this proclamation. But the proclamation and the despatch also shall be produced. I tell the right hon. gentleman the government is not in possession of the official grounds and causes which may have induced the Governor-general of India to express himself as he has done in this proclamation; but as the proclamation is itself an official document, he shall have it, and with it an opportunity of inviting the House to an expression of its condemnation. The right hon. gentleman commenced his speech by admitting that her Majesty's government had shown a great deal of forbearance in respect of the exhibition of political feeling, and that little political influence has been exhibited in the appointments which have been made to the governments of our foreign possessions. The right hon. gentleman said, that he differed from those around him, as to the selection of Lord Ashburton for the purpose of conducting negotiations on a most critical and important point with the United States, that with respect to the appointment of Sir C. Metcalfe, he had heard of it with delight, for that it was impossible that any appointment could have been made more calculated to promote the interests and to conciliate the feeling of those whom he was destined to govern, and that he gave the fullest credit to the government for that appointment. With respect to the appointment of Lord Ellenborough, the right hon. gentleman did not condemn it, nor did he say that the government had acted unwisely. (On the contrary, the testimony which the right hon. gentleman had borne to the fitness of my noble friend for the office which he holds was striking. If speaking of Lord Ellenborough, the right hon. gentleman said,—“I followed him at the Board of Control, and had then an opportunity of proving his prudence, discretion, and the intimate knowledge he possessed of Indian affairs. The papers he left behind him were sufficient to convince me that no appointment could be better chosen.”)

That was the testimony borne by the right hon. gentleman, not merely with the candour which is sometimes found in a political opponent, but from his own knowledge and observation; the right hon. gentleman declared the appointment to be a proper one; and it must be taken that up to the time of Lord Ellenborough's leaving England, the right hon. gentleman acquitted the government of all fault. Then what has Lord Ellenborough done since which justifies the right hon. gentleman in all the condemnation which he has uttered, and which will justify him in calling on the House to pronounce a formal censure on the noble lord? The House should bear in mind that the right hon. gentleman is a warm political opponent to the government, and that prejudices may naturally be excited in his mind with respect to the conduct of Lord Ellenborough. That noble lord has certainly reversed the policy on which the late government acted, but it must be admitted that, whatever the conduct of the noble lord has been, however triumphantly his military operations have terminated, every act of his will now be rigidly scrutinized. Lord Ellenborough is charged with an intention to outrage the religious feelings of the people

of this country. Now, all who know his disposition and feelings on religious subjects must be convinced, that as far as regarded his intentions, at least, he is innocent. Looking also at the acts of Lord Ellenborough—not his former and remote conduct—but to his acts at a time when he was hailing the return of a triumphant army, and alike offering and receiving all the congratulations of success, he writes thus.—I am reading from a private letter from Lord Ellenborough, dated October, 1842:—"I enclose for you a copy of the circular letter I have addressed to all the clergy of India. You see I am not unmindful of the real source of the success which has attended me."

Now I ask (continued the right hon. baronet), what, in common charity, we must all sometimes feel ourselves obliged to ask, that this House will regard not merely the naked acts but the obvious intentions, not the mere act of publishing this proclamation, but the *animus* of that act. The letter shows that amidst all the excitement of triumph he did not forget to whom his country and himself were indebted for it. I am about to read from a letter addressed by the Governor-general, the right hon. Lord Ellenborough, to the chaplains in the Upper Provinces of India. It was as follows:—

"SIMLA, Oct. 1, 1842.

"Rev. Sir,—The seasonable supply of rain, following our prayers recently offered to God for that blessing, whereby the people of the north-western provinces have been relieved from the fear of impending famine, and the great success recently obtained by the British arms in Afghanistan, whereby the hope of honourable and secure peace is held out to India, impose upon us all the duty of humble thanksgiving to Almighty God, through whose paternal goodness alone these events have been brought to pass. Nor have we less incurred the duty of earnest supplication that we may not be led to abuse these last gifts of God's bounty, or to attribute to ourselves that which is due to Him alone; but that we may have granted to us grace so to improve these gifts as to show ourselves worthy of His love, and fit instruments in His hand for the government of the great nation His wisdom has placed under British rule. In the absence of any superior ecclesiastical authority in these upper provinces, I request that you will take these matters into your serious consideration, and that you will on the 16th of October offer to Almighty God such prayers and thanksgiving, at the time of Divine service in your church, as may seem to you best suited to impress upon your congregation the greatness of the blessings which the British nation in India, and the whole people of India, have recently received; and the high moral responsibility under which God has placed all those who have committed to them any part in the government of this empire. I remain, reverend Sir, your affectionate friend,

"ELLENBOROUGH."

The man who, at the time he penned this proclamation, having no ecclesiastical authority, thought it his duty on the 1st of October to call upon the clergy to offer thanksgiving in the public service,—is it possible that he can be charged with a desire to represent himself as a favourer of Hindooism? What sentiments could be more worthy of a Christian Governor? Whatever effect this proclamation may have had upon the religious feelings of the community, if that effect should have been to shock the feelings of any one individual, the first man who would deeply regret this result would be the Governor-general himself. So much for the intention. Now for the act itself, and its effects; an effect deeply to be lamented indeed, if it be true that it has resulted in a feeling of jealousy between the two great divisions of the population of India, the Mahomedans and Hindoos. But I think my hon. friend has allowed his zeal to carry him too far. His horror of Hindooism has led him to go a little too far in his defence of Mahmoud of Ghuznee, and has induced him to exalt the heathen conqueror into a hero. My hon. friend has described him as a man most indifferent to wealth, and influenced in his destruction of idols by no other feeling than a conscientious abhorrence of idolatry. I apprehend if my hon. friend had consulted the pages of the historian who has been quoted, Mr. Gibbon, he would have found that other motives are attributed to this conqueror of the Hindoos. Mr. Gibbon says—"The fertile kingdom of Guzerat attracted his ambition, and tempted his avarice."

And he then goes on to say, that he can devote only one page to a recital of all the battles and sieges which took place during twelve different incursions. I think, therefore, that my hon. friend is paying undue honour to the character and conscientious feelings of Mahmoud, when he attributes his invasion to a pure preference of Mahomedanism over Hindooism. My hon. friend says, he never before heard of these gates. He will find a reference to them in some of the highest authorities; and they are mentioned by Mr. Mount Stuart Elphinstone, not as a religious relic, but as—what Lord Ellenborough, I believe, considered them—a great trophy of war. Mr. Mount Stuart Elphinstone, one of the best historians of Indian affairs, thus speaks of these gates. I ask the house not to view with undue prejudice the conduct of my noble friend the Governor-general of India. My hon. friend has represented that Lord Ellenborough most wantonly and capriciously restored these gates, which never were heard of before, which have not been mentioned by any historian, for the mere purpose of paying a compliment to the superstitions of the Hindoos. Mr. M. Elphinstone says,—“The tomb of the great Sultan Mahmoud is also standing, about three miles from that city. It is a spacious but not a magnificent building, covered with a cupola. The doors, which are very large, are of sandal wood, and are said to have been brought by the sultan as a trophy from the famous temple of Somnauth, in Guzerat, which he sacked in his last expedition to India.”

The authority of Mr. M. Elphinstone is at least a very high one, and it appears that he did not consider these gates as a religious relic. He expressly uses the words which Lord Ellenborough applies to them—namely, that they were a trophy taken from the Hindoos. Now as to the account which Gibbon gives of the incursions of Mahmoud upon the unoffending people who then inhabited the country of Hindoostan. He says,—“In this foreign narrative I may not consume a page; and a volume would scarcely suffice to recapitulate the battles and sieges of his twelve expeditions. Never was the Musulman hero dismayed by the inclemency of the seasons, the height of the mountains, the breadth of the rivers, the barrenness of the desert, the multitudes of the enemy, or by the formidable array of their elephants of war. The Sultan of Ghuznee surpassed the limits of the conquests of Alexander; after a march of three months over the hills of Cashmir and Thibet, he reached the famous city of Kinnoge, on the Upper Ganges; and in a naval combat on one of the branches of the Indus he fought and vanquished 4000 boats of the natives. Delhi, Lahore, and Moultan were compelled to open their gates: the fertile kingdom of Guzerat attracted his ambition and tempted his stay, and his avarice indulged the fruitless project of discovering the golden and aromatic islands of the Southern Ocean.”

The result of these expeditions—of this continued hostility—was the transference of these gates, this trophy of war, as it is called by Lord Ellenborough, from Guzerat to Ghuznee. They have also been mentioned by more recent writers. I have no doubt my hon. friend has read the work of Dr. Kennedy, who thus speaks of these gates:—“It was with no ordinary feelings that I stood at Ghuznee, by the tomb of Mahomet of Ghuznee. My long residence in Guzerat, and intimate familiarity with its people, its history, and its traditions, had made this destroyer's name a sort of household word in my memory.”

Having resided at Guzerat for a long period, having heard the traditions of the people, and well knowing their feelings, he says that the destroyer's name was a sort of household word in his memory. What, then, must it have been in the memory of those whose ancestors he had pillaged and ruined? Dr. Kennedy says further, after speaking of “The direful history of this man's doings,”—“This man of blood sleeps in peace in a spot of great rural beauty. His direful ravages are consecrated by bigotry as holy wars against infidels.”

These direful ravages were consecrated by bigotry as holy wars! But when we recollect the treasure which this man had amassed from the direful devastation he committed, do not let us be too forward in attributing these “direful ravages” of war altogether to zeal for the faith which he professed. I say again, Sir, that Lord Ellenborough regarded these gates as most important trophies of war, and as trophies of war he considered their return to those from whom they had been wrested would be most acceptable. I sincerely believe that the thought never entered Lord Ellenborough's mind that by this act he could be considered as paying a compliment



to the religion of the Hindoos, or that he would by it offend the religious feelings of the people of this country. I believe that he considered the gates trophies of war, and trophies of war alone, and that, as such, he restored them to the people who had been deprived of them. I think when my hon. friend speaks of the "restored temple of Somnauth," he puts an erroneous construction upon the words. I apprehend that, when Lord Ellenborough used those words, he was under the impression that the original temple of Somnauth, which had been restored by the wife of Holkar, still existed, and it was his intention to place the gates in that temple. I believe he never intended to give any instructions for the restoration of the temple. The expression cannot, I think, justify the belief that Lord Ellenborough meant to undertake the restoration of a ruined temple, that it might become the receptacle of these gates. I wish to have no concealment from the House on such a subject as this; though I am sure hon. gentlemen would not ask for the production of documents of a private nature. As I before stated, the government is not in possession, nor is the Court of Directors, of any official correspondence on this subject. But I cannot hold one language in this House while I am writing another language to India; and I freely admit that this proclamation has attracted the attention of the government, and that they have made such communications to India on the subject as they have thought consistent with their duty. To such a delicate subject I cannot make more direct allusion, but I may state generally that it has received the attention of the government, and I am sure the hon. gentleman will not press me to make known to the House, or publish to the world, the comments we have felt it our duty to make. I cannot, however, profess opinions in this House at variance with those which I hold, and which I have communicated to my noble friend. But, Sir, I think the question comes to this—is it consistent with justice and equity to take one particular act of a public man, and on account of that act to visit him with censure? Why, who is there who could stand under such an ordeal? What public man is there who, looking back upon his conduct for the preceding year, does not know that there have been errors—that there have been inadvertencies—that, from the pressure of business, there has been neglect; and are you to judge him, not by the tenor of his general conduct, but to select one particular act, and say,—“I move my abstract vote upon this; I charge you with neglect, or impolicy, or incaution, in one particular instance; do not plead your general conduct; do not refer to the services you have rendered; do not speak of the time and abilities you have employed in the public service; do not say that your strength is sinking, as a plea of justification for your neglect in this particular instance; I judge you by this one isolated public act.” When the right hon. gentleman brings forward his motion of distinct censure, I will appeal to the House to do justice towards Lord Ellenborough. I am not prepared to say that I will go all lengths in defence of this act and proclamation. I will not say, “I see no danger in it; there is no expression I object to; I think it a fit and proper compliment to be paid to the people of Hindoostan.” I will not take that course; but I will say that it will be destructive of the character of the nation, it must be a fatal check upon the energies of public men, if you once establish the precedent that you will not allow the general conduct and services of a public man, who may be acting at a distance of 5,000 miles, to be pleaded against a single act of indiscretion. Oh, I have too much confidence in the justice of this House to imagine that it will not draw a parallel between the 9th of February, 1842, and the 9th of February, 1843. I will tell you of the condition in which, when Lord Ellenborough landed in India, he found some of the men of the Madras army. I will tell you of what tidings were brought to him. I will appeal to your own feelings on this subject at this time last year. I will remind you of the description that was given of the greatest disaster that ever befell the British army, of the destruction of 17,000 men and women, through acts of the grossest treachery, of the despondency which the Governor-general found prevailing among some portions of his army; and then I will exhibit to you, in the course of ten months more, that same Governor-general at the head of 40,000 men, having effected the evacuation of the kingdom in which we suffered such reverses—having, on the scene of every former disaster, retrieved our honours—[the remainder of the sentence was rendered wholly inaudible by an enthusiastic burst of applause from all parts of the House.] I will show you these dispirited sepoys converted into an army, excited

by enthusiasm, ready to contend, if they could be brought against them, with the best and most disciplined troops of Europe; and, then, exhibiting this contrast, I will remind you (addressing the Opposition) of the language you held on this subject at this time last year. I will then ask you whether it is consistent with justice, with decency, or with common sense, that you, whose policy has been reversed [loud cheers from the Ministerial side,] should take this single proclamation and tell the Governor-general, "True, you have conquered; true, you have re-established the British name in Afghanistan; true, you have created one universal feeling of security throughout Hindoostan; but you have issued an unwise, an improvident proclamation, and the reward of your labours shall be, disgrace and condemnation."

The motion having been modified and amended was agreed to, and the House adjourned.

## DISTRESS OF THE COUNTRY.

FEBRUARY 17, 1843.

In the fifth night's debate on Viscount Howick's motion, that "This House do resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to consider so much of her Majesty's Speech as refers to that depression of the manufacturing interests of the country which has so long prevailed, and which her Majesty has so deeply lamented,"

SIR ROBERT PEELE spoke as follows:—Sir, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Cobden) has stated here very emphatically, what he has more than once stated at the conferences of the anti-Corn-law league, that he holds me individually—[Great excitement]—individually responsible for the distress and suffering of the country; that he holds me personally responsible; but be the consequences of those insinuations what they may, never will I be influenced by menaces either in this House, or out of this House, to adopt a course which I consider—[The rest of the sentence was lost in shouts from various parts of the House.]

Mr. Cobden rose and said: I did not say that I held the right hon. gentleman personally responsible—[shouts of "Yes, yes," "You did, you did,"—cries of "Order," and "Chair."] [Sir Robert Peel: you did.] I have said that I hold the right hon. gentleman responsible, by virtue of his office—["No, no," much confusion]—as the whole context of what I said was sufficient to explain—["No, no," from the ministerial benches.]

Sir Robert Peel: Sir, the expression of the hon. gentleman was not that he held her Majesty's government responsible; but, addressing himself to me, he said, in the most emphatic manner, that he held me individually responsible [Cheers.—Sir James Graham handed a paper to Sir Robert Peel.] I do not want to overstate any thing. I am not certain, on reflection, whether the hon. gentleman used the word personally, but he did twice repeat that he held me individually responsible. I am perfectly certain of that. The hon. gentleman may do so, and may induce others to do the same, but I only notice his assertion for the purpose of saying, that it shall not influence me in the discharge of a public duty. Sir, I wish most sincerely that I had been able to conduct this discussion in the same manner and with the same temper with which we conducted most of the discussions on the tariff of last year. And now, I will separate altogether, in approaching this discussion, all that part of it which relates to public interests, to the welfare and well-being of the great body of society, from that which may be assumed to be more of a party and political character. I can do that with greater ease, because I must say that the noble lord, in the course of his speech, set the example of so conducting the discussion. It would be, indeed, a great advantage if we were enabled to discuss matters of such importance without reference to party interests or party recriminations. I will, then, conduct all the first part of what I have to deliver to the House on the principles on which the noble lord made his speech on introducing the motion. The noble lord proposes that the House should resolve itself into a committee, to consider that part of the speech from the throne which refers to the public distress. Sir, I approach the consideration of that motion, I trust, in a temper befitting the acknowledged and long-continued distresses of this country—in a temper, too, befitting

the fortitude with which privations and distress have been borne. I will consider singly and exclusively whether the adoption of the motion of the noble lord is likely in its results to mitigate that distress, or revive prosperity. I make no objection to the form of the motion of the noble lord, if an objection in point of form could be made. There are occasions on which, if you can realise public advantage or mitigate severe distress, to urge technicalities against the administration of a remedy, would be most unwise and unbefitting the legislature of a great country. But, in point of form, there is no objection to be urged against the motion of the noble lord. That motion is perfectly constitutional, and liable to no objection in point of form. If any objections are to prevail against it, they must be objections of a substantial kind. To such only will I address myself. Many hon. gentlemen have mistaken the nature of the motion. The hon. gentleman who spoke last, and who assumed such a tone with regard to the motion, inferred that the noble lord proposed a committee of inquiry into manufacturing distress. The hon. gentleman said that his only objection to the motion was, that the inquiry was not to be more extensive, and did not include agricultural as well as commercial distress. Why, Sir, the noble lord proposes no inquiry whatever, in the sense in which the hon. gentleman refers to inquiry. The noble lord does not propose to inquire for the purpose of ascertaining the cause of the present distress, and all those who are inclined to support his motion in the expectation of having such an inquiry instituted, will find themselves entirely disappointed if the noble lord should be successful. What the noble lord proposes is, that the House should resolve itself into a committee of the whole House for the purpose of considering the distress of the country, and then, I presume, he has some proposition to submit for the relief of the distress. I must own I think the general complexion of this debate has not been such as entirely to convince me, that with the numbers here present, and influenced by the feelings that naturally prevail on each side of the House, with only the change of having Mr. Green sitting at the table, instead of having the speaker in the chair, that any very useful consequences could arise from the discussions of measures under such circumstances. But when we have got into committee what will the noble lord do? What is the motion that the noble lord will make in committee? There is to be no inquiry. When the noble lord gets into committee, he will not content himself with having succeeded so far, but must pursue some course or other. What course will that be? Will the noble lord propose a series of measures founded on the principles of which he is the advocate—the principles of free-trade. If he does, what must be the inevitable consequence? All the functions of government must necessarily be suspended. I speak of government not in the party sense of the word. I speak of the executive government, of that which is entrusted with important functions, and which has hitherto been responsible for their performance,—responsible for performing the particular duty—of explaining the expenditure of the year, and the financial means of the year at a certain period of the session, and of proposing the financial measures of the year. If the noble lord succeed in his motion, those functions of the government must be completely suspended. Will the noble lord propose to deal with the sugar duties? But I will take matters of mere revenue, which do not operate in the slightest degree by way of protection; and with respect to which there can be no objection, from conflicting and rival interests. Take the case of tea. Will the noble lord touch that. We have a prospect of increased trade with China. If you lower the duties on tea, there will probably be a greater consumption; there will be an increased importation of tea, and probably an increased demand in China for the produce of this country. Will the noble lord, therefore, submit a proposition for the reduction of the duty on tea? Will he take the same course with respect to tobacco, and with respect to the duty on raw cotton? Some gentlemen, in the course of the debate, have urged the reduction of the duty on raw cotton as indispensable to the prosperity of our manufactures. The duty on wool has also been referred to. These are all articles with respect to which duties are imposed, not for the purpose of protection, but for the purpose of revenue. Suppose the noble lord proposes to reduce the duties on tea, tobacco, cotton, and wool,—I should like to ask him how any one entrusted with the financial affairs of this country can stir one step, or know what course to pursue. So much for matter of detail, if the noble lord enters into detail. In the same way,

the functions of government with respect to commercial treaties, must be at once suspended. Suppose the noble lord think it desirable to reduce the duties on wine, or on fruits, what course are the government to take with respect to negotiations now pending, and which had been pending for the last four or five years. The late chancellor of the exchequer, some three years ago, took credit, or rather debited himself with a reduction of £300,000 in the revenue, consequent on the expected termination of a commercial treaty with France, on which negotiations have been pending ever since. If the noble lord deals with these questions of revenue, in this committee of the whole House, how is the executive government to proceed with respect to the preparation of financial measures, or the conduct of negotiations with foreign powers for the reciprocal reductions of import duties? It is clear that the functions of government would be suspended by the noble lord's success in carrying such a motion as this. And at what time does the noble lord come forward? Hitherto it has at least been the practice to give the government some time after the commencement of the session, until the estimates have been voted, and until a full review can be taken of the state of the finances of the country, before they are called upon to propose measures for providing the means for the year; but the noble lord within a fortnight after the commencement of the session, calls on the House to permit him to undertake this duty. And at what period also, respecting the revenue itself, does the noble lord propose this measure? At a period when probably the future produce of the yearly revenue is subject to peculiar uncertainty. It is difficult to foresee what will be the product of the income-tax. I made an estimate of it on the best grounds on which I could calculate; but we have not made sufficient progress in its collection to enable us to determine whether the estimate was well founded or not. At this particular period, the revenue has been affected by the measures of last session. It was affected by the discussion which preceded them; and yet the noble lord proposes to go into a committee of the whole House, for the purpose of considering measures affecting the finances of the country. Will the noble lord avoid the difficulty by contenting himself with moving some such general resolution as this—"Resolved, That the principles upon which the tariff of last year was founded ought to be carried to further extent?" Is that the motion which the noble lord would propose? There is to be no inquiry, and he must propose either a specific measure of details, or he must propose some general resolution, embodying a general principle. The noble lord has no alternative. If you could do any thing at the present moment to create uncertainty, to paralyse trade, to suspend all commercial speculations, it would be to move some general indefinite resolution like that, leaving every man uncertain as to what specific articles the general resolution was to be applied. This country has not yet recovered from the effect of the tariff of last year. The discussion which preceded that tariff necessarily added to commercial embarrassment. It was impossible it could be otherwise. During the whole time of the discussion, commercial men were in a state of uncertainty as to what would be the final resolve of the House of Commons, and there was a suspension of commercial dealings. It affected the consumption of timber, and affected almost every other article of importance which entered into the tariff of last year. If you now enter on the subject again, without indicating the articles of which you mean to alter the duties, you do more to diminish public confidence and add to commercial embarrassments, than by any other course you could take. One great evil has been a gradual diminution of prices. When there is a tendency to an increase of prices there is a tendency to commercial prosperity. The effect of a gradual increase of prices is well explained by Mr. Hume—David Hume, in one of his essays on trade. Threatened reductions in the tariff tend to produce declining prices, and a vague resolution, such as I have referred to, leaving it uncertain to what articles the principle was to be applied, so far from being a relief, would aggravate all the existing evils. I hope I have conducted the discussion on the principles which I laid down, avoiding all party considerations, and making my appeal to the reason of the House against the proposal of the noble lord. Mere success in carrying this motion would be only a triumph over the government. That the noble lord disclaims, and I must say, from the character of the speech with which he proposed the motion, I have confidence in the declaration of the noble lord. He does not seek a temporary triumph of party by his motion. He proposes it in order to give a hope of relief for the distress of the country. Inquiry is

not intended. You are not to have the operation of the Corn-laws—you are not to have the operation of other restrictive laws investigated, but some proposition is to be made. I have attempted to show that that proposition must refer to details or to general principles—that the one would suspend and paralyse the functions of government, and the other would add to the existing embarrassment and distress. Sir, I do not oppose the noble lord's motion on the ground of denying the distress which prevails. There are but too many evidences of that distress. And when some of my right hon. friends refer to circumstances which rather appear to indicate a hope of more favourable times, they have done so, not for the purpose of denying the existence or extent of the distress, but for the purpose of meeting arguments used by hon. gentlemen, and showing that in some cases there have been exaggerations of the degree of distress. And one hon. gentleman, the member for Manchester, (Mr. M. Gibson) has charged my right hon. friend with having made a statement, founded upon Mr. Horner's report, which is not confirmed by the details of that report. But then the hon. gentleman referred to the report of Mr. Horner for autumn last. Might it not have occurred to the hon. gentleman that an improvement might have taken place between autumn and January? Now, on the 30th of January, Mr. Horner did make a report, and, with respect to the new buildings, he did use this language:—"In the course of last year, forty-nine new concerns were set to work, having 1,378 horses' power, and employing 3,490 persons. Calculating five persons to each horse power, the usual rough estimate, when these mills are in full work they will give employment to 7,000 persons. Some of them are new buildings, and some of these are additions to pre-existing buildings; in other cases, the occupiers have removed from smaller to larger premises; but in all of them the parties must have invested new capital; and it would be irrational to suppose otherwise than that all of them have entered upon a branch of trade which they believed to hold out a fair prospect of yielding a remunerating profit. The greater part of the information from which these tables have been constructed, was collected between the beginning of September and the middle of November—that is, before there were any symptoms of that revival which began about the latter date; so that if it had been possible to give the actual state of the mills in the present week, there is every probability that a comparison with the same time last year would give a still more favourable result than I have shown above. I have formed this opinion, not merely on general reports of improved trade, but from facts such as the following, contained in returns recently received from the superintendents in my district:—Mr. Superintendent Davies, resident at Ashton-under-Line, reports to me, that on visiting the mills of A on the 9th of November, 1842, 252 looms were standing; on the 18th of this month all were at work, and 22 added. On the 10th of November, 1842, B had 500 looms, and 2-5ths of the spinning machinery stopped: on the 18th of January, only 250 looms, and 1-4th of the spinning machinery stopped. On the 28th of October, C had 186 looms stopped; on the 18th of January all were at work. In July, 1842, D had 252 looms stopped, and eight pair of mules working short time; in January, 1843, all were at work, and on full time. In July, 1842, E had 190 looms stopped; in January, 1843, all were at work. In July, 1842, F had 167 looms stopped; in January, 1843, nearly all were at work."

Do not let me be misunderstood. Mind—I do not deny the existence of great distress. If the noble lord's motion could really and truly tend to relieve the country, we have, I say, such full and ample evidence of that distress as to induce me to enter into the committee that he desires. But when gentlemen say, that we are in a worse state in January than we were in October, then I wish to show you that in that statement there is exaggeration. That is the remark I have to make upon that point. I have, Sir, little more to say of the reason why the government cannot, and why the House ought not to assent to the motion of the noble lord. But then, during the course of this discussion, I have been condemned by many gentlemen for the course which I pursued, in the last session, with respect to the tariff, and the principles on which it professed to be founded, and for the declarations which I made in the course of the present session. I will refer first to the principles on which the government acted in proposing the tariff of last year. In undertaking to revise the commercial code of this country—I beg the House to recollect the circumstances under which it was undertaken. There

was in that year, and there had been for several preceding years, a great deficiency in the amount of the revenue. This country, too, was engaged in two wars. The East-India Company was interested in the one—that carried on to the west of the Indus, and the other the war with China. It was, under these circumstances, that her Majesty's government undertook the revision of the commercial code. There was a deficiency of £2,400,000, or of a sum something nearer £3,000,000. That deficiency did not deter us from undertaking what we thought would be beneficial to the commerce of the country. But, in order to revise our duties, it was necessary to create a new deficiency; and we, Sir, did not shrink from performing that which we felt to be necessary, because it compelled us to perform the unpopular act, which nothing but a sense of our duty could reconcile us to, of calling upon the country to submit to an income-tax in a time of peace. Without that tax, we could not have proposed a revision of the tariff, when we had to create a new deficiency of £1,200,000. But in the face of those wars—in the face of this deficiency—in the face of that deficiency which a reform in the tariff must create, we undertook the revision of our commercial code. I announced the principles on which that revision was to be undertaken. I ask, if it were possible to have undertaken a revision of the whole of our Customs' duties without having explained the general principles on which that revision was to have proceeded. There were two principles between which we had to choose, the principle of protection to the native industry, or to abandon prohibitory duties, and relax commercial restrictions. We had to take either one or the other, and we declared that we thought that the principle of protection could be carried no further in the abstract. I repeat the word, notwithstanding the objections of the hon. gentleman to the term. In the abstract he said, that protection was not to be defended as the permanent system of this country. We thought, that a revision of the commercial code ought to proceed upon the principle of abandoning prohibitory duties, and relaxing the restrictions on commerce, and now I am taunted for not carrying out that principle to all its legitimate and logical consequences, and told that I am not to pay any regard to specific or peculiar circumstances, and not to give any consideration to long vested interests! But when I stated that I thought that the pervading principle ought to be rather a relaxation of restrictions, than an increase of protection, I accompanied the declaration of that abstract principle with a distinct declaration that that principle, admitted to be a wise one, ought to be applied, in a country like this, with great caution and great circumspection—first, because we ought not lightly to affect great interests, which had grown up to great importance under long-enjoyed protection; and, secondly, because you ought not, by the course that you pursued, to throw discredit upon the principle you sought to enforce, by applying it so rashly and indiscriminately, as to cause more evil than good, and produce a doubt in the truth of the principle itself. I stated at the time that it was with those qualifications I should apply the principle, and in taking that course, I am justified by the conduct of those who had preceded me, who had advocated those principles, and set the example of removing commercial restrictions. When Mr. Huskisson, in 1825, proposed his revision of the commercial law of this country, the language he used I will read to the House. Mr. Huskisson was a great commercial reformer, a practical reformer, who felt all the responsibility, and anticipated all the consequences of his acts, and the House will see how he qualified the general principles of which he advocated the adoption. Mr. Huskisson, on the 21st March, 1825, used these words:—"I can assure the committee, that if I am about to recommend alterations which are at variance with the ancient sentiments of this country, in respect to colonial policy and trade, it is not because I consider the views of our ancestors as necessarily erroneous, or that innovation must necessarily be improvement; but it is because the circumstances and state of the world, in which we have to examine colonial interests, have changed: and it becomes us, as practical statesmen, to deal with those interests with a reference to that change. It is only in this sense, and with this qualification, that I desire to be looked upon as an innovator. I am not anxious to give effect to new principles, where circumstances do not call for their application; feeling as I do, from no small experience in public business—and every day confirms that feeling—how much, in the vast and complex interests of

this country, do general theories, however incontrovertible in the abstract, require to be weighed with a calm circumspection, to be directed by a temperate discretion, and to be adapted to all the existing relations of society with a careful hand, and a due regard to the establishments and institutions which have grown up under those relations."

Are not these, I ask, the words of practical wisdom? They were used when that great commercial reformer undertook large and most important reforms in our commercial code. Do we not find here the prudence of a practical man, who, while he laid down general principles, thought it right and proper that they should be accompanied by circumspection in their application? Now take other men who have not been responsible for the practical consequences of the principles that they desired to see acted upon—take one who carried the principles of free-trade as far as any gentleman of the House—take the highest authority, for so I must still call him; for it appears to me that all—not all, but many subsequent writers on political economy, have only tended to confound by their observations that which was elucidated by Adam Smith; at least the doctrines propounded by Adam Smith, to my apprehension, appear more clear and satisfactory than those of his commentators. Take Adam Smith, and no man went further in advocating free-trade, the abolition of restrictive duties, and what does he say? This is the way that with reference to a state of society constituted like ours, he qualifies his doctrines. He says—"The case in which it may sometimes be a matter of deliberation how far, or in what manner it is proper to restore the free importation of foreign goods, after it has been for some time interrupted is, when particular manufactures, by means of high duties or prohibitions upon all foreign goods which can come into competition with them, have been so far extended as to employ a great multitude of hands."

But you will not allow agriculture to be reckoned a manufacture, or entitled to those benefits laid down as properly belonging to a manufacture by this great authority. But to continue my extract—"Humanity may in this case require that the freedom of trade should be restored only by slow gradations, and with a good deal of reserve and circumspection. Were those high duties and prohibitions taken away all at once, cheaper foreign goods of the same kind might be poured so fast into the home market, as to deprive all at once many thousands of our people of their ordinary employment and means of subsistence."

These are the words of the theoretical writer—of a writer not responsible for the practical application of his views, but they correspond with the doctrine of the practical reformer—of a minister of the Crown who did lie under responsibility. And, Sir, following in the footsteps of these great authorities with respect to our commercial principles, I accompanied their enunciation with a respectful admonition to the House to apply those principles with great circumspection—with great caution. It is said, however, that we did absolutely nothing by the tariff, that it was a mere delusion. Is that true? What did we do in that tariff to which you now attach so little value? Sir, in respect to articles of raw produce, constituting the elements of manufactures, in respect to almost all these articles we reduced the duty payable on their importation—in some cases we reduced it to five, and in other cases to two per cent. And where exceptions were made they were allowed on the ground of revenue. Take for example the case of cotton wool. I am here speaking of raw produce, the materials of manufactures. Take, I say, the case of cotton wool; the duty on which was retained on account of the revenue. With respect to articles half manufactured, if I may so speak—half raw and half manufactured—the general rule was to reduce the duty to ten or twelve per cent. With respect to articles of manufactures, the general rule was, to impose a duty of 20 per cent. Exceptions were made from these reductions in favour of certain articles, but they were made in favour of weak and unprotected interests. The claims of the cork-cutters, for example, were urged by the hon. member for Finsbury—the claims of the straw manufacturers were also among those urged—and when exceptions were made from the general reduction which the tariff effected, they were made in favour of branches of manufacture of that nature for which there could be no ground for making exception other than the desire to protect the fair interests of the parties concerned. We did except certain great articles. We excepted some on the ground of negotiations pending with respect to them. In

the case of wine—in the case of brandy—in the case, I think, of vinegar—in the case of French fruits, and in those of several other articles, we did not reduce the duty in order that we might employ those duties as instruments of negotiation, with a view of effecting a reduction in the duties imposed by other countries on the produce of our own industry. I am not disposed to carry too far that principle of withholding from ourselves the benefits of reduction of duties, in order to force other nations to act in a reciprocal manner, and in many cases we weakened the effect of instruments we held in our own hands, by reducing the duties of articles relative to which negotiations might have been entered into. Our general rule was, that in cases where the articles were elements of manufacture, or where there was risk from smuggling, we took to ourselves the advantage likely to arise from a reduction of duty on these articles; but on others, wine for example, we made no reduction of duty, and intend to make no reduction of duty, in the hope that we shall thus induce other countries to give to us an equivalent advantage; and with respect to cases in which the articles in question are articles of luxury. I do think—as I presume the late government also thought—that before you consent to a reduction of the duties—on French wines for example, that you should attempt to prevail upon France to permit hardwares and cutlery from Sheffield to enter her dominions, a greater advantage to this country than that derived under the existing system. Indeed, it would not, I believe, be satisfactory to the country if we were to reduce the duty at once on articles like wine—articles of luxury, used only by the wealthier classes, without making an attempt to procure from the grower of the wine some corresponding advantage to the people of this country. These were the cases in which we excepted certain articles from the operation of the tariff; and it is by withholding them that we may hope that negotiations—negotiations I am sorry to say too long pending—may be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. But we cannot be fairly charged, by those who have been parties to pending commercial negotiations, with having reserved too many articles from the operation of the general plan of reduction imposed by the tariff, and reducing the duties upon them without continuing these negotiations—we excepted silk, and wine, and brandy. During the discussion upon the tariff no one proposed that we should at once part with all the advantages while negotiations were pending, which the duties on these articles gave us. [Viscount Howick contended that the operation of the tariff ought to have been made universal.] Such might have been the noble lord's views; but I am sure that the general sense of the House—I do not mean to include the opinions of every particular member of it; the general sense of the House was in favour of the reduction upon the duty of the articles referred to being reserved, until further progress had been made in pending negotiations. I certainly did not apply the tariff to the article of sugar—and I admit at once that there can be no article of greater importance to this country than sugar—no article with respect to which a reduction of price would be of more importance. But this I can with truth affirm, that it was no desire to protect great monopolies, which induced us to reserve the reduction upon sugar. Whenever you do deal with that article, I doubt whether you will not deal with it in a manner which will be for the advantage of the West Indies, as well as for that of the grower of foreign sugar. We reserved the article of sugar partly with the view of using it as an instrument for the purpose of effecting reductions in the import duties payable upon our produce in foreign sugar-growing countries; but much more on this ground, that we did not deem it right to give a free unlimited admission to foreign sugar, without any reference to the consideration as to whether it was the produce of free or of slave labour. I said this should be our ruling principle when I was in opposition; I maintained it last session in office, and I still adhere to it. Certainly you should, if it be in your power, attempt to make stipulations in favour, not only of the abolition of the slave-trade, but for the modification of slavery itself. You should attempt to obtain conditions with respect to the state of slavery before you grant the indiscriminate reduction of duty. I expressed this opinion last year and acted upon it, and I still maintain it; and considering the discussion in which this country was lately involved—considering the position it has maintained with respect to America—considering the principles which it has maintained with respect to France—I do say, that there never was a period when it was



more important that this country should prove to the world that she did not relax, for the purpose of obtaining pecuniary advantage, those institutions which she formerly maintained. There has been a great disposition to charge this country with having being influenced to the suppression of slavery by the pressure of mercantile considerations; and it certainly would abate our moral influence, if we did lightly, for the sake of a free-trade in sugar, abandon the opportunity of making such a trade instrumental in ameliorating slavery in sugar-growing countries. I say no more on this point. When I was asked, at the beginning of the session, what particular article should be subjected to a reduction of duty, I declined to answer, on the ground that it was not fair to make such a selection, and to inquire into the intentions of government as to proposed changes at the very opening of the session. But, at any rate, we can see what has happened with regard to the timber duties. The opposition made to the change I proposed to those duties was, that I went much farther than her Majesty's late government, and that I was sacrificing a large portion of revenue in the hope of reducing the price of timber. We permitted colonial timber to come in at a mere nominal duty, and we greatly reduced the price of Baltic timber. But, says the hon. gentleman opposite, "you have done nothing for the consumer. You have merely lost a revenue, without reducing the price of timber." That is not the fact. There has been a great diminution in the price of timber. Sir, I quite admit that, in the present state of the country, it is not very easy to determine how far the reduction in price is referable to the diminished duty or the diminished demand; but that there has been a great reduction in the price of timber cannot be doubted for a moment. I hold in my hand a comparative statement of the prices paid for timber in the dock-yards, during the years 1841 and 1842. In 1841 Riga timber was £5 : 6 : 6d. a load; in 1842, after the 10th October, it was £4 : 2 : 6d. In the first year Dantzic timber was £5 : 4 : 9d.; in 1842, £3 : 18 : 9d. In deals there was no such difference, for the duty did not apply. In the first year Canadian red pine was £4 : 16 : 6d.; in the second, £3 : 16 : 6d. In the first yellow pine was £4 3s.; in the latter, £3 1s. In the first year, Stockholm timber was £4 10s.; in the latter, £3 1s. Now, so far as an absolute reduction of price, it has unquestionably taken place to an extent at least equivalent to the abatement of the duty. I admit, as I said before, that the same causes may have influenced the depression of price in timber as those which operated in the case of other articles. But, says the hon. gentleman (Mr. Cobden), "you reduce the price of timber when there are no factories to be built;" as if there was nothing else in the world but factories. I don't undervalue the importance of factories; but to say that, when bridges, houses, and various other buildings are always to be constructed or repaired, no advantage is derived in the great reduction of the price of timber, simply because no additional cotton mills are required, is an argument which only indicates that the hon. gentleman's notion of commercial prosperity and the happiness of the nation all centre in the erection of cotton mills throughout the country. I think I can establish the importance of the alteration by the words of Mr. Deacon Hume, for there was no one article to which he attached greater importance than timber. He said:—"You have coal and iron cheap; make timber cheap too, and you have the three great elements of commercial prosperity."

And although factories are not building, and mill-owners have not derived any advantage from the reduction which has lately been effected in the price of timber, yet the hon. gentleman would find it very difficult to convince the great bulk of the community that they have derived no advantage from the diminution in the price of timber. We come next to articles of human subsistence. It is said we did nothing in the tariff respecting such articles, because, in order to conciliate the good will of our supporters we were afraid to touch them effectually. Why, we found cattle prohibited, and salt meat subject to high duties; we diminished the duties, and remitted the prohibition. But it is said that not the slightest benefit accrued from the reduction, or the abolition of the prohibition: that the change has not varied in the slightest degree the price of meat. If I retained the prohibition and the high duties, what would be said? How you would dwell on the importance of the traffic in meat and cattle, and charge me with obstructing the commercial prosperity of the country. But I reduced the duty on meat to an amount fixed at so moderate a rate, that you (the opposition) did not object to it, and I took away the prohibition from the impor-

tation of cattle, and now you say that the change has not been attended with the slightest advantage—that it is all a mockery and delusion. Sir, when that language is held with respect to those articles of subsistence, it leads me to think that you greatly overrate the advantages which you now say are to be derived from a free-trade in corn. Why, what said the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Baring) the other night? He did not say that we manifested any desire to sacrifice the permanent interests of the country for the attainment of political or party advantages. On the contrary, the right hon. gentleman proclaimed that we perilled the existence of the government by removing the prohibition on cattle, and that if it were not for the forbearance of the opposition, we should have been left in a minority, and been compelled to relinquish the reins of power. Well, according to the right hon. gentleman's representation, we are entitled to credit; for how could we have given a greater proof that we were bent on pursuing what we believed was for the public advantage, than to stake our existence as a government on the removal of this prohibition? And when the right hon. gentleman claims credit for supporting me on the reduction of duty, he ought at least to admit that we were not desirous of deferring to opinions in which we did not partake, or of sacrificing the public welfare for the sake of conciliating our supporters. Now, with respect to the corn-laws. I did certainly retain the principle of a fluctuating scale. It was said, when I proposed that measure, that it would be of no advantage in diminishing the price of corn. It was said that I was rendering the exclusion of foreign corn more strict by the addition of new towns in taking the averages. It was said too that the Bank of England would be exhausted of its gold in consequence of the adoption of the sliding-scale. But you cannot deny that there has been a great reduction in the price. Oh, but it is now said that it is entirely owing to the harvest. But you prophesied that the harvest would be an unproductive one. There is no doubt that it is very difficult to determine to what cause the fall of price is owing, but at any rate you cannot deny that there has been a considerable reduction. Now, take the prices—and you will see the reduction effected, no doubt, by the harvest as a main cause,—for the last six years. On the 2nd January, 1836, wheat was 59s. per quarter; in January, 1838, it was 52s. 4d. per quarter; in January, 1839, it was 78s. 2d. per quarter; in January, 1840, it was 68s. 5d. per quarter; in January, 1841, it was 61s. 8d. per quarter; in January, 1842, it was 63s. 1d. per quarter; and in January, 1843, it was 46s. 11d. per quarter. Now, it is said that the reduction in price is no benefit whatever. I confess that this is a most discouraging statement, when we compare such comments with the predictions indulged in before any alteration was made. Now, if ever a principle were maintained by the hon. gentlemen opposite, it was that the high price of provisions was the main cause of the depression of trade, and of the diminished consumption of articles of manufacture. A pamphlet was written by an hon. gentleman, an active member of the Anti-Corn-law League, which gave the price of corn and other articles of subsistence for some years past, and in which it was contended that twenty millions of additional capital was applied to the purchase of articles of food, and withdrawn from the purchase of manufactures; and the great evils of the country were attributed to the high prices of provisions. From some cause or other you have now a low price, and now the doctrine is, it does not matter a farthing what the price of provisions is—the great panacea is a free-trade in corn. Well, with respect to the objections to the new towns. I introduced them to prevent frauds. Some said I had a covert intention of increasing protection; some said that I should diminish the prices in the new towns, and raise the duty on foreign corn. What is the result? In twenty-five cases, with one exception, the price in the new towns has been higher than in the old. Thus I did take a double security against fraud without any increase of protection. I am charged with leaving the law in a state of uncertainty—with implying a secret reserve to alter the law next session. Now the fact is, a minister answers questions in his place in parliament under great disadvantages. A minister desires to give every information that he can on public concerns consistent with public duty. On the first night of the session the question was addressed to me—"Do you intend to alter the corn-laws this session?" My answer was—"I do not." Then it was said I had made a voluntary declaration that I would not alter them this session, but that I had made a reserve with a view to a succeeding session. Now, in these cases, much depends on the animus of the questioner. Of course

the hon. gentleman who put the question to me was specifying the present session, and never thought of asking me—do you, in the course of the next or of any future session, intend to propose an alteration in the existing law? When the question was put to me, whether I contemplated any alteration in the present session, I answered frankly—I do not. To this some gentlemen immediately say—See in what state of uncertainty you leave the law. You, as minister, defer the course you mean to take. You will do nothing this session, but you do not say you will abide by your law. Abide! Sir, I do not undertake to say I will abide by any law, but I will say this—I do not now contemplate any alteration in the law; I see nothing in the experience of the last four or five months to induce me to take a different view of the question from what I did last session; but if I am asked whether I will undertake, whatever may be my experience, whatever may be the proof of failure that may force itself upon my conviction—I say, if after such proof and experience of failure, I am asked whether, in order to purchase support, I will make a stipulation to adhere to a law that shall have failed, I say at once that there is no support that I will consent to purchase on such conditions. In a matter of this kind, which cannot be considered to involve a vital question, which cannot be supposed to endanger the monarchy, for instance, or the union of the kingdom—in a matter of this kind, I say, I should be unworthy the station I hold, if, as a minister, I were to undertake to maintain the law one hour after I had become convinced that the public interest demanded its abrogation. If, however, this law is to be altered, what is the principle on which the alteration is to take place? If the noble lord brings forward a motion of this sort, and if the real object of that motion is to obtain an alteration of the Corn-laws, I have a right to ask the supporters of the noble lord what their real views are? If they succeed in this motion, they must be well aware that not one hour could elapse without their being called upon to make a full statement of their intentions. Does the noble lord mean to adhere unalterably to the principle of a fixed duty? See what taunts the right hon. gentleman, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, threw out against me, under an idea that I might not adhere unalterably to my own measure; yet what was the conduct of the right hon. gentlemen opposite with their own plan for the settlement of the Corn-laws? They first brought forward the proposition of a fixed duty, but before they even approached the introduction of their own bill, the noble lord declared that his views had undergone a change. We argued that a fixed duty was altogether delusive as a protection to agriculture, because in a season of great scarcity, or when corn rose to an average of 73s. or 75s., it would be found utterly impossible to levy the fixed duty. The noble lord, in proportion as he gave more consideration to the question, began to see that this was the case, and then the noble lord avowed himself ready to modify his own law in this respect, and declared that he was ready to abandon his fixed duty under a pressure of high prices. The noble lord, whose friends now demand that I, as minister, shall either abandon this law, or pledge myself to maintain it irrevocably under all circumstances, the noble lord himself, before he approached the introduction of his own bill, claimed, and justly claimed, for himself the privilege of modifying his views. He determined to retain the system of averages, and when wheat approached the price of 75s., he admitted that his fixed duty could not be enforced. And the noble lord was quite right to claim for himself this privilege; but I do say those who concede this privilege to the noble lord, ought not to be so strict in demanding of his opponents that they shall irrevocably adhere to a measure they have once adopted. Between the noble lord and ourselves there is, in point of fact, no difference of principle. The noble lord contends for the necessity of a protective duty. But then the noble lord contends also that a fixed duty would have the effect of establishing a regular trade in corn, and would have the effect of securing an active intercourse with the United States of America. Well, the noble lord vindicates a fixed duty of 8s., on the ground that the landed interest is entitled to protection, and the late Chancellor of the Exchequer calls upon us to settle the question. To settle the question! Does the right hon. gentleman really feel confident that a fixed duty of 8s. will settle the question? Does he feel confident that such a fixed duty will put an end to agitation, and lead to the immediate dispersing of the anti-Corn-law league? Why, this very night we were told by the hon. member for Salford, that a fixed duty of 8s. would be equi-

valent to a tax on corn of £20,000,000. This, I admit, was a very extravagant calculation; but supposing a fixed duty of 8s. to be in force, and wheat at 75s., if the hon. gentleman even approaches the truth, if he supposes the tax to be only one-half of his first estimate, if he calculates it only at £10,000,000 instead of £20,000,000, will any man tell me that it will not be the hon. member's intention to go on agitating the question till he obtain the repeal of the 8s.? My objection to a fixed duty is, that it presses with peculiar severity upon the consumer when corn is high, and it equally presses upon the producer when prices are low. I shall be told, indeed, that a fixed duty will lead to a greater regularity in the trade; but I say there are circumstances which make it impossible, under any state of the law, to calculate upon stationary prices for such an article as corn. Even in New York itself, when prices have in no way been influenced by a demand from this country, there have been as great variations in price, under a system of complete free-trade, as in England under the sliding-scale. The two noble lords opposite are agreed as to the amount of a fixed duty, but the noble lord, the member for Tiverton, would maintain it, not as a protection to agriculturists, but with a view to a revenue. If the noble lord the member for London is wrong, if the landed interest be not entitled to protection from the importation of foreign corn, if it be not necessary to restrict the importation of foreign corn for the purpose of preventing too great dependence on foreign supply, if those two positions be conceded, I will venture to say that a fixed duty of 8s. on foreign corn, for the purpose of revenue, would not be maintained for two months. Observe the noble lord, the member for Tiverton, denies that there is any necessity for protection; he would impose a fixed duty of 8s. on foreign corn for the mere purpose of gaining revenue. The noble lord cannot resist the inference, that if the landed interest have no need of protection, and if corn be a fit subject of taxation, corn that is the produce of your own country ought to be liable to taxation. He cannot resist the argument that the duty ought not to be one of 8s. on the importation of foreign corn, but 4s. on foreign corn, and 4s. on home-grown corn, the duty to be collected, for greater convenience, at the mill at which it is ground. The noble lord wishes to maintain a duty of 8s. for the purpose of revenue. What, then, would be the state of the case? You levy a duty of £5,000,000 on one species of corn which is your own produce—I mean malt. And would you levy a duty of £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 on foreign wheat, and no duty whatever on home-grown wheat, if the landed interest be not entitled to protection? It is quite clear, you would in that case, be reversing the principle on which you proceed in the case of barley. You derive nothing from foreign grain in the article of barley. You derive your whole revenue from barley, the produce of your own country, and the noble lord would derive the whole of his revenue from wheat, the produce of other countries, and exempt wheat which is the growth of his own country from any part of the duty. Therefore, I think the noble lord's (Lord John Russell's) principle of vindicating his fixed duty, because the agricultural interest is entitled to protection, is, at least, a better ground to assume than that which is stated by his noble friend, who claims the duty on foreign corn for the mere purpose of revenue. The other alternative is the absolute and total abrogation of the Corn-laws. I must say I entertain firmly the opinion that if you were at once to give effect to your views, and permit the free and unrestricted importation of foreign corn, you would displace such a mass of productive industry in this country as would greatly aggravate the present distress. Seeing nothing in the experience of the working of the present law to induce me to change the views I expressed in the course of last session, believing that the application of a fixed duty would have no more tendency to settle this question than the retention of the present law, believing that the total repeal of the Corn-laws would be most injurious to the interests of this country, I cannot consent to the measures which are proposed as a substitute for the existing Corn-laws. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. F. T. Baring) who spoke last night with so much animation—a degree of animation which I have not witnessed in this House since the day that he detected a differential duty on colonial asses, charged the present government with having unsettled every thing, and settled nothing—that is to say, that we, who have so far at least reformed the commercial code of this country, that we have reduced the duties on raw produce, and the elements of manufactures to less than 5 per cent. in every case, the duties on half manufactured

articles to 10 or 12 per cent., and the duties on manufactured articles to 20 per cent., that her Majesty's government have unsettled every thing, and settled nothing. The right hon. gentleman acquiesces in his present motion, which, although I am confident, is not brought forward by the noble lord with that view, yet clearly appears after the comments made on it by the noble lord's friend, the hon. member for Halifax and others, to be in effect, whatever it may be in intention, an implied censure on government for not having brought forward some other measure of extensive relief. Sir, nothing is so easy as to call for measures of relief, and to insist on government proposing an immediate relief for the public distress. I am afraid that at all times, and under all circumstances, governments are liable to such a demand; but it is much easier to make that demand than to comply with it; but I think it rather hard, that this charge of having unsettled every thing and settled nothing, should proceed from our predecessors in office. I should like to compare the course which the late government took in 1840 with the course I and my colleagues took in 1842. Sir, it is with unaffected regret that I enter into those party conflicts on a question of this kind. I wish most heartily and sincerely, that the right hon. gentleman had in this respect followed the example of the noble lord. I think these mere party topics are misplaced on a question of this kind, and on an occasion like the present; but when party attacks are made with great acrimony, there is no alternative but to defend one's self. In 1840, noble lords and right hon. gentlemen opposite were in possession of power. They now declare themselves the great, the uniform, the consistent advocates of the principle of free-trade, and maintain that they have always looked to the relaxation of commercial restrictions as the true foundation of national prosperity, and sometimes they charge us with being the servile adherents of the opposite system, while they are constantly drawing a contrast between the weak and inefficient measures of the present government and those which they themselves adopted when in possession of power. I will not take the measures which they attempted to bring under our consideration when they were in their last extremity. Every great sinner, if you judge of him when his end is approaching and he is greatly alarmed for his existence, when he makes vows of a better life, seems a moral man; if you were to judge of him from that period of his life only, you might think highly of his moral qualities, but the time to judge of his adherence to great principles is not when he is in the hour of dying, but when he has strength to give effect to his intentions. If as minister you had not strength to give effect to your principles, you might have given proofs of the sincerity of your conviction, by sacrificing power and place for the sake of adhering to them. I will not dwell, therefore, on the conduct of the late government in 1841, when there were significant proofs given that their tenure of power was very precarious; but I will go to the year 1840, when the indications of approaching dissolution were not quite so clear and certain, and I will compare the acts of the late government, in 1840, with the acts of the present government, who are said to have settled nothing and unsettled every thing. In 1840 there had been a continuance of severe distress—there had been a great suffering. That was the time to have declared to parliament that you looked to the removal of commercial restrictions for the restoration of prosperity. You say we admit the existence of general and severe distress, and yet we have done nothing in the course of the present session to relieve it. Why, you did the same in 1840. On the 16th of January, 1840, you put these words into the mouth of her Majesty:—"My lords and gentlemen—I learn with great sorrow that the commercial embarrassments which have taken place in this and other countries have subjected many of the manufacturing districts to severe distress"—

Words not very different from those which her Majesty has made use of in the speech of 1843. Now, what were the great measures of commercial relief which you brought forward in 1840? You charge us with the abandonment of principle in not carrying out our principles to their legitimate extent? What was the course you yourselves pursued in 1840? Look at the course you then took with reference to the article on sugar. It would appear from the language you now hold as if you had been straining every nerve, and making every sacrifice, for the purpose of obtaining the free admission of sugar. This was in no remote period—in 1840. The distress had then been of great extent and long duration. If you were so thoroughly convinced of the truth of your principles, 1840 was the time to assert

them, and to maintain your opinions at any hazard. But the late Chancellor of the Exchequer tells me it is, above all things pernicious not to allow a reduction of duty on sugar—a great article of consumption. Who ever heard of such misconduct (exclaimed the late Chancellor of the Exchequer) on the part of a government? But what did you, the late government do, as to sugar? In 1840, a year of distress, after you had admitted the existence of the distress in her Majesty's Speech, a motion was made on the subject of "sugar," by the hon. member for Dumfries (Mr. Ewart), and to this effect:—That the duties on foreign sugar should be reduced from 63*s.* to 35*s.* per cwt. There was an opportunity for the vindication of your principles. There was a duty of 63*s.* existing upon the importation of foreign sugar; and the hon. member for Dumfries proposed to reduce it to 35*s.* Why, he was vigorously opposed by her Majesty's ministers. On a division, the Noes were 122, and the Ayes 27; and this motion for the reduction of the sugar duties was negatived by a majority of 95. The tellers for the majority on that occasion were Mr. Tuffnell and Sir T. Troubridge. But what course did those who now call for the importation of foreign sugar take upon that occasion? Every one of the then ministers voted against the motion of the hon. member for Dumfries. Nay more, they assigned as a reason for so doing, that there ought to be a distinction between sugar the produce of free-labour, and sugar the produce of slave-labour; at least they urged that that was a most important consideration. True, they said, coffee and other articles are the produce of slave-labour; but there is a material distinction between the two articles, and we will not admit foreign slave-made sugar. The late Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is now for settling the trade, rejected the hon. member for Dumfries' motion in 1840, though distress was pressing and severe, and the right hon. gentleman used all the influence of government against it. As far as language and argument can be depended upon, the speculators in sugar were at that moment led to suppose that the duties would be maintained. In 1841, however, when the pressure upon the government became very great, they themselves proposed a reduction of the duties on sugar, and charged their adversaries with indifference to the sufferings of the people, because they would persist in voting in 1841 as they had voted in 1840. Was that the way to settle trade? Was that the way to give confidence to colonial proprietors and merchants who trade in foreign sugar?—to resist in 1840, on grounds, which I admit, were not stated as permanent, but on grounds infinitely more uncertain than any thing which I have said respecting the corn-law—a proposition for reducing the sugar duties, and then, in 1841, to propose to reduce them yourselves? Do I complain of you for proposing that reduction? Do I deny you the right, if your views altered, and you saw reason to propose a change, to make it? No, I do not; but I do think that you ought to have some little toleration, and exercise some charity, before you make indiscriminate and acrimonious attacks upon your political opponents, much less obnoxious to them than yourselves? Well, but the corn-laws. You charge us with causing uncertainty about the corn-law. Who would not suppose, from the tenor of this debate, and the charges made against me, that hon. gentlemen were actually martyrs to the cause of corn-law repeal. To hear them talk, say one would believe that they had, during the last seven or eight years, been advocating an alteration of the corn-laws, as the one great panacea for the national distress. The question of the corn-laws was brought forward in the House of Lords in 1840. Uncertainty about the corn-laws! Does it add to certainty to make the corn-laws an open question? Does it add to certainty to have no opinion, as a government, on the subject? This is a question to which you profess to attach great importance. You say that it ought to be settled, in order that the public mind may be relieved, and the agriculturists know to what extent they may invest their capital: that a man who takes a lease of a farm for nineteen or twenty-one years may know what he has to depend upon. Is it consistent with such language as this, that during five or six years you permitted the corn-laws to be an open question? The question of the corn-laws was brought under the consideration of the House of Lords by Earl Fitzwilliam in 1840, and one member of the government voted for the noble Earl's motion. The Earl of Clarendon upon that occasion said:—"It would be untrue were he to say that he had any hope or expectation that their lordships would agree to the noble earl's motion, but he should still deeply regret a contrary

decision, because negating the resolution would affirm that the present law required no change, and, therefore, admitted of no consideration."

There was the dictum of one of the ministers—he would be sorry to see the resolution negated, because that would imply there was to be no change in the existing law! Well, but the head of the government and the organ of the government—he who spoke the collective opinion of the cabinet on such a great question also addressed the House, and held this language:—"Indeed, upon the motion itself, as presented to the House by his noble friend, he had very little difficulty. For the noble earl proposed, that 'it was expedient to enter into an inquiry upon this subject.' Now, he (Lord Melbourne) was distinctly of opinion, that it was inexpedient."

Here is a mode of giving confidence to the agriculturists, and letting the men who take leases know what they have to depend upon. To think, after this, of my being condemned because I do not think it quite wise to pledge myself for ever to the maintenance of the existing law. Lord Melbourne went on to say:—"Yet he would guard himself against being supposed to pledge himself to maintain the existing duties. He had never so pledged himself, nor did he mean to do so. This was no question of stubborn principle from which he could safely pledge himself not to swerve; for considerations of various kinds of economy or of policy might arise, not only to justify, but to render necessary the adoption of a different course. Yet, under present circumstances, he did not think it wise for parliament to stir the question, as they would stir it, if they adopted the motion of his noble friend."

And then, in order, perhaps, to give confidence to the agriculturists, and to assure them that his government contemplated no change in the corn-law, Lord Melbourne pounced upon a declaration made by Mr. Van Buren, and quoted it in this manner:—"He could not dismiss from his mind the apprehension that it was unwise to rely entirely for the maintenance of a great portion of the population upon a foreign supply. In that opinion he had the support of Mr. Van Buren. The United States, with a great and yearly increasing population, with almost an unlimited amount of land which yet remained to be brought into cultivation, might be supposed to be in less danger than any other nation in the world; but Mr. Van Buren was of opinion, that it would be unwise to rely upon a foreign supply of food for the people of the United States. Mr. Van Buren was a sensible man, his opinion was entitled to great consideration; but this was not his opinion alone, but that of a great portion of the people of that flourishing nation. Mr. Van Buren was a great magistrate, and he (Lord Melbourne) entertained the greatest respect both for him and for the people over whom he presided; and he was justified in believing, that he would not have expressed such an opinion, if it had not agreed with the opinions of a great portion of the people of the United States."

In the very next year after Lord Melbourne had thus expressed himself, his government proposed a fixed duty upon the importation of corn, and now a member of that government, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, loads me with vituperation for the conduct I have pursued with respect to the sugar duties and the corn-laws. Will he allow me to ask him, who held the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer under Lord Melbourne, how, with the opinions he now professes on the corn-laws, he could reconcile it to his conscience to sit quiet while the organ of the government, the First Lord of the Treasury, expressed opinions on that subject from which he so entirely dissented? What did the right hon. gentleman himself propose? Did he propose any measures of sound commercial policy in the year 1840? I ask the House and the country to compare what the late Chancellor of the Exchequer did with my tariff? The way in which the right hon. gentleman proposed to supply the deficiency in the revenue was by increasing the customs and excise duties, including the duty on all articles of raw produce 5 per cent., and by increasing the assessed taxes 10 per cent. That is the contrast between the financial measure of 1840 and 1842. The right hon. gentleman advanced the duty on every article of raw produce, the elements of manufactures—he increased the duty on wool and raw cotton; and now he is the man who accuses me of having settled nothing, and unsettled every thing. The right hon. gentleman appears to think that there is nothing in the motion of a party character, and that, if carried, the government might give effect to it. Surely the right hon. gentleman must know

perfectly well, not only that the success of such a motion would paralyse the functions of government; but that, if it were to pass, no government, which had a proper sense of what was due to the honour of public men, of what was due to the welfare of the country, could carry on the public affairs after being subjected to such an implied censure on the part of this House. The success of the motion would be an implied censure on the government. You have not allowed the government the usual period for bringing forward its measures. We never denied you time to bring forward the measures you might consider necessary; but you would supersede us in the functions of the government by calling upon the House within a fortnight of the commencement of the session to take our functions out of our hands. You ask what we have done for the purpose of relieving the distress of the country? We have done other things, or, at least, attempted to do other things than the reduction of the Customs' duties. We have been in office now, I think, about fifteen or sixteen months, and I think we have a right to look back upon what has been effected during that period without any sense of shame. We have been successful in terminating two wars. The noble lord seems to deny it. Whenever the noble lord pleases to claim exclusive credit to himself for terminating the Chinese war, and to take that credit from the present government, then I tell the noble lord I shall be perfectly prepared to meet him on that point, and I will voluntarily supply him with any information he may require, and which it is in my power to give. However, if it be not owing to the wisdom of our measures, at least the noble lord will not deny that we have had the good fortune to bring to a successful termination two wars, which were absorbing the capital of this country in unproductive labour, and striking, as all wars must, a double blow, by consuming the resources both of this country, and of that with which we might be carrying on a commercial intercourse. Sir, we hope to effect a reduction in the estimates of the present year. We trust we shall be enabled to do this, and although the termination of these wars has not been so distant as to enable us to make all the reductions which ultimately parliament may expect, we hope we shall be enabled, in the course of this session, to present estimates in the three great branches of the public service—the naval, military, and civil—showing a reduction of £850,000. Thus we are at least beginning the process of reducing the estimates. For the last four or five years there has been a constant and progressive increase of the expenditure of the country, and a decrease in the revenue; and in the present session we shall, I trust, at least commence an alteration which will, I hope, lead to a continued series of diminished estimates. We have been enabled to reduce the military force in Canada between 8,000 and 4,000 men; we have attempted to open British markets to colonial produce; to diminish the duties on colonial produce in every case where it entered into competition with our own, and thus to make some advance towards treating the colonies as an integral part of the empire. Sir, we have laboured to effect, and I trust we have laboured successfully, to effect an adjustment of those differences with the United States, which had been for forty years in existence, differences which had only been exasperated by delay, and which differences were the main causes for apprehending a disturbance of the relations between the two countries. We tried to soothe those differences without any compromise of British honour. Sir, we also tried to soothe that unfortunate feeling of hostility towards England, which it has been my regret to perceive has existed in some part of the French nation. We are not responsible for the origin of that hostility, which has exhibited itself in various stations of life, and amongst different classes. But, Sir, at the same time that that feeling certainly exists, as I have stated, it is a remarkable spectacle for the civilized world that the two men who hold conspicuous offices—the most conspicuous offices in the governments of their respective countries—are the two men the most distinguished in each for their military achievements and their military fame. Those men have practised the art, and they have learned also the miseries of war in the fields of Toulouse and of Waterloo. They have stood opposed to each other in the field of battle—

——“*Stetimus tela aspera contra  
Continuuque manus.*”

And it is a remarkable thing to see those men the best judges of the sacrifices which war imposes upon nations, are now exerting all their influence in the two



countries to inculcate lessons of peace. It is a glorious occupation for their declining years. The life of each has been protracted beyond the ordinary term of human existence, and may God grant that the lives of both may be long preserved—that they may each, in his own land, exhort their countrymen to lay aside all national animosities, and enter into a more glorious and honourable competition for increasing the amount of human happiness. And, Sir, when I compare the conduct and example of these men, who have seen the morning sun arise upon living masses of fiery warriors, so many of whom were to be laid low in the grave before that sun should set—when I see them teaching lessons of peace, and using their salutary influence to discourage their countrymen from war; when I contrast their object with that of anonymous and irresponsible writers in the public journals, who are doing all they can to exasperate the differences that have prevailed, who misrepresent every action of two governments desirous of cultivating peace; who represent in France that the minister of France is the tool of England, and in England that the ministers of England are sacrificing the honour of England to a fear of France, I do trust that the example of these two illustrious warriors will neutralize efforts such as those to which I have referred, efforts not directed by zeal for national honour, but employed for the base purposes of encouraging national animosities, or promoting personal or party interest. Sir, we have effected these things, but do I plead that as any reason why the House should reject the motion before it? If you really believe that it will contribute to diminish permanently the distress, or to relieve the difficulties of the country, do I say that any regard for what the minister may have done, should be an obstruction to its success? No. I admit it ought not. You may approve of our foreign policy—you may think that we have laid the foundations of peace—you may hear with satisfaction that the public expenditure will be reduced—you may hope that all differences with the United States may not be adjusted, yet, that the principal causes of apprehension have been satisfactorily and honourably arranged; but still while you feel disposed to acknowledge these services, and to approve that conduct, if you believe that the adoption of this motion will have the effect of relieving the public distress, let no consideration—I say it with perfect sincerity to this side of the House, and it is unnecessary for me to say so to the other—let no consideration of party, no attachment to persons, no predilections in favour of particular men, interfere one instant with a vote which you conscientiously believe calculated to diminish distress, to lessen privation, to lay the foundations of the commercial prosperity and permanent welfare of the state.

An amendment by Mr. Ferrand was withdrawn. The House divided on the original motion:—Ayes, 191; Noes, 306; majority, 115.

### AFFGHAN WAR—VOTE OF THANKS.

FEBRUARY 20, 1843.

The paragraphs of her Majesty's Speech in reference to the events in Afghanistan having been read—

SIR ROBERT PEEL rose, and spoke as follows:—Sir,—The motion with which I shall conclude the observations I have to make will be in precise conformity with the notice which I gave the other day. It will be that the thanks of the House be given to the governor-general of India for the ability and judgment with which the resources of the British empire in India have been applied in support of the military operations in Afghanistan; and that the thanks of the House be given to the general officers who immediately conducted those operations, and to the other officers of the army, for the ability, skill, and perseverance displayed by them, and their indefatigable zeal and exertions throughout the late campaign. The motion will also signify our grateful acknowledgments and high approbation of the valour and patient perseverance displayed by the non-commissioned officers and private soldiers, both of the European and native army, during the whole of that campaign, and for their gallant behaviour upon every occasion in which they came into contact with the enemy. I consider all I have to do on the present occasion is to establish the fact that the operations in Afghanistan were of sufficient public importance to

warrant me in calling upon the House to support the motion with which I shall conclude, and that the several parties, both civil and military, to whom my motion refers, did perform those services and did exhibit those qualities for which it is proposed that the thanks of the House should be given to them. In conformity with all usage in bringing forward motions of this kind, I shall studiously abstain from any reference to the matters of merely a political nature. I shall not call in question the policy of the original advance into Afghanistan, nor shall I attempt to vindicate upon this occasion the policy of the withdrawal of the troops from it; and if in the course of my address one word shall fall from me which shall have a tendency to provoke a discussion upon merely political grounds, or which shall place the conduct of one person in invidious contrast with that of another, I declare beforehand, that the word so falling from me will be at variance entirely with the intention with which I rise to address the House, and I therefore make for it, if it shall fall from me, this preliminary apology. Sir, I feel great difficulty in addressing the House upon this subject. I feel that no address that could be made to them could weaken the impression which must have been derived from the perusal of this volume. There is something of romantic interest cast over the whole of these operations. There is something in the remoteness of the region—in the wild and savage grandeur of the scenery—in the undisciplined, desperate, and ferocious valour of the enemy, and the deadly precision with which they used the rude implements of war of which they were possessed. There have been such dreadful disasters, partaking rather of the character of phantasms and of hideous dreams than of the reality of life; such brilliant successes; such instances of devotion to the public service; of desperate fidelity in the face of overwhelming numbers. There is again the unhoped for delivery of the whole of the prisoners, as if a gracious Providence had conduced to "succour and provide for the desolate and oppressed, and show pity upon the prisoner and captive." I say all these things do constitute an interest upon the perusal of these volumes, the details of them written at the time from the scene of action—the hand that had wielded the sword guiding the pen that described them—all these things I say, constitute an interest which can only be weakened by any such address as I can offer to the House upon this occasion. The details of the transactions in question commence with the autumn of 1841. It is necessary, as I am to propose a vote of thanks to the governor-general of India, Lord Ellenborough, for the ability and judgment with which he prepared the resources of the British empire in support of these operations, that I should state to the House, as clearly as I can. [Lord Palmerston: prepared?] I do not say "prepared," but with which Lord Ellenborough "applied" the resources of the British empire. It is necessary, I say, as I propose that the thanks of this House should be given, where I consider they are most justly due—to the governor-general of India—that I should recall to the recollection of the House the precise position of affairs when Lord Ellenborough assumed the government of India up to the end of October, 1841. The aspect of affairs at Cabul was, upon the whole, of a pacific nature. I will try as fairly as I can, in giving an account of the state of affairs, to quote the expressions made use of by the late governor-general, or by Sir W. M'Naghten in his account relative to the state of affairs in Cabul. The priesthood and chiefs of clans and their military retinue were dissatisfied with the influence exercised by the British government, but still there was no indication from which there was reason to apprehend either universal discontent, or the hazard of general outbreak or insurrection. So far from it, that the 20th of October had been fixed on by Sir W. M'Naghten as the day on which he should depart from Cabul, handing over his diplomatic functions to Sir A. Burnes, proceeding to Bombay, for the purpose of taking on himself the civil government there. About the middle of October, a rebellion broke out against the British authorities, on the part of certain chiefs of the Ghilzie tribes; that rebellion was attributed to two causes; the first is the withholding of certain payments, to which they considered themselves entitled, on account of the keeping open of the passes; that certain allowances, which were made to the Ghilzie chiefs for that purpose, had been in part withheld; secondly, making the Ghilzie chiefs responsible for the robberies that had been committed by the eastern Ghilzies. In consequence of that, in October the passes between Cabul and Gundamuk were seized, and the military communication between Cabul and British India was intercepted. Sir R. Sale was ordered to force

the passes. He left Cabul with three regiments—viz., the 13th queen's regiment, the 35th, and 37th native infantry. The 37th regiment, which accompanied him part of the way, was subsequently recalled to Cabul. On the 11th November, after experiencing very great obstruction in the passage, Sir R. Sale reached Jellalabad with six days' provisions only, and surrounded, in fact, by all the armed population of the district. On the 7th of November, at Cabul our countrymen were attacked on every side. I am trying as far as I can in making these preliminary recitals to use the exact expressions, of course, the most accurate, the most fair to all parties, used in reciting them in the volume. Sir Alexander Burnes and his brother were both murdered. At the same time, a district north of Cabul, called Kohistan, broke out into insurrection, and Captain Woodburn, with a party of 108 invalids, who were proceeding from Ghuznee to Cabul, was cut off, and the whole of the party accompanying him were murdered. Accounts also reached Cabul that the disturbances extended to between seventy and eighty miles south of Ghuznee. It became necessary for Lord Auckland, who was then administering the Indian government when the accounts reached Calcutta of the state of affairs at Cabul, to determine what course it was most consistent with the public interests that he should take. Lord Auckland, writing on the 2nd of December, recommended that a strong force, not less than from 10,000 to 12,000 men, should be ready to be concentrated between the Sutlej and the Jumna, and he also desired that an additional force should be placed in Peshawur, in order to provide for any contingencies that might arise. On the 3rd of December, Lord Auckland, before he heard of the military disasters at Cabul, expressed his opinion. He says:—"It would be vain to speculate upon the issue of the contest at Cabul; but, in the extreme event of the military possession of that city, and the surrounding territory having been entirely lost, it is not our intention to direct new and extensive operations for the re-establishment of our supremacy throughout Afghanistan."

That was written when Lord Auckland had heard of the first insurrection of the Ghilzies, of the massacre of Sir W. M'Naghten and Sir Alexander Burnes, but not of the disasters which befel the army under General Elphinstone. At this time Sir R. Sale was at Jellalabad, and an attempt was made to relieve Sir R. Sale by a detachment of four regiments under the command of General Wild, who was ordered to force the Khyber pass, and to rescue, if possible, Sir R. Sale from his position, and to give every aid that such additional force could give. Lord Auckland, on the 19th of February, had heard of the failure of General Wild to force the Khyber pass, and on the receipt of that intelligence he expresses himself in the following way in respect to our policy in Afghanistan:—"Since we have heard of the misfortunes in the Khyber pass, and have become convinced, that with the difficulties at present opposed to us, and in the actual state of our preparations, we could not expect, at least in this year, to maintain a position in the Jellalabad districts for any effective purpose, we have made our directions in regard to withdrawal from Jellalabad clear and positive, and we shall rejoice to learn, that Major-general Pollock will have anticipated these more express orders by confining his efforts to the same object."

That was on the 19th of February. Lord Auckland said, in the same despatch, to show that he was not regardless of the state of the prisoners at Cabul:—"The painful situation of the officers' families and European and native soldiers, who are prisoners in Afghanistan, engages our most anxious thought, and any measures which we can adopt with fair and honourable prospect of advantage for their comfort or release will be eagerly adopted by us."

On the 2nd of February Lord Auckland had desired that a commanding force should be concentrated at or near Peshawur. It will be remembered, that at this time—at the beginning of February—in addition to the force then supposed to be at Cabul labouring under very great difficulties, there was also the force at Candahar under General Nott. The fortress of Ghuznee was also occupied by a British force, and another fortress (Khelat-i-Ghilzie) was occupied by Captain Craigie and a small detachment. On the 10th of February orders were given by Lord Auckland to General Nott as follows:—"Events will, in every probability, have determined your course of proceeding long before the present letter, or any communication founded upon the letters of the 28th and 31st ult., can be in your possession. But he thinks it now right not to omit the chance of distinctly informing you, that it is his desire

that you should, without reference to the terms of the extract of the despatch of the 28th ult., act solely so as may best, in your judgment, secure the paramount object of the safety of the troops placed under your orders, and may uphold, at the same time, the honour of the British arms."

Now, I have stated, as fairly as I can, the position of Lord Auckland, and the orders which he issued—the orders for the withdrawal to Jellalabad, the discretionary order to General Nott, and the assembling of a large force of 10,000 or 12,000 men between the Sutlej and the Jumna, and also the care which he took that the British honour should be maintained, while every thing that was possible was to be done to secure the comfort and the safety of the troops. Those were the arrangements made by the late governor-general previously to his retirement. I now come to the opinion of the commander of the forces upon the then state of affairs. Sir Jasper Nicolls, in his communication of the 24th of January, recites an interview which he had had with Mr. Clerk, who had been our resident at Lahore, a gentleman in the civil service of the government of India, of the most distinguished ability and the highest order. In the course of the interview Mr. Clerk impressed upon Sir Jasper Nicolls the great advantage of re-establishing the British arms in Afghanistan, and if military operations permitted, to recover possession of Cabul. Sir Jasper Nicolls, however, entertained these opinions at that time with respect to the state of the army:—"Admitting the undeniable force of this argument, I am greatly inclined to doubt that we have at present either army or funds sufficient to renew this contest. Money may, perhaps, be obtainable, but soldiers are not, without leaving India bare. Shortly before I left Calcutta, there were at least 33,000 men in our pay in Afghanistan and Scinde, including Schah Soojah's troops, but not the rabble attached to his person. How insufficient that number has been to awe the barbarous, and at first disunited tribes of Afghanistan and Scinde, our numerous conflicts, our late reverses, and our heavy losses fully prove."

I think it is quite clear, then, that the opinion of the late governor-general and of the commander of the forces was adverse to any advance on Cabul from the side of Jellalabad; that he thought they ought first to release Sir R. Sale from his position, and that he did not contemplate attempting, during that year, the re-establishment of British supremacy in Cabul, at least, not from the side of Jellalabad. And who, sir, I will ask, is prepared to blame Lord Auckland for the discretion which he then exercised, and the decision to which he then came? It is easy, indeed, for us to be military critics at a small expense, seated in this comfortable chamber, with a full knowledge of all the subsequent events, and rejoicing at present successes—with no responsibility upon us, such as rested on the governor-general—the responsibility not merely of forcing a passage to Cabul against any enemy that might oppose our army, but first to provide for the interests and the security of the vast empire, the safety of which was entrusted to his care. It was necessary for the governor-general to look at the indications of hostility on the side of the Burmese empire—on the side of Scinde—and to remember the withdrawal of British troops from India to take part in the operations in China. Recollecting these facts, I am far from blaming Lord Auckland for the view he took of the position of affairs. Before we take upon ourselves to pronounce an opinion adverse to his policy, we must place ourselves in his position, with an army dispirited by reverses—we must have his intimate knowledge of the circumstances; above all we must have his responsibility. Viewing the transactions thus, I must say, I do think Lord Auckland was exempt from blame in contemplating the withdrawal of the troops from Afghanistan. What, too, was the position of the troops at Candahar? I am looking at this question, not with regard to its policy, but in a military point of view, and I am taking into consideration the circumstance which must have weighed upon the mind of Lord Auckland. The communication was intercepted; the army of Candahar was 549 miles from the Indus; and between the army and that point there was also interposed the Bolan pass. What was the position of the army at Cabul? The army at Cabul was 540 miles from Ferozepore, the nearest town of British India, and the whole of the Punjab had to be traversed; and this too, at a time when, it must be well known to many hon. gentlemen, a feeling and a spirit prevailed among the Sikh troops not the most favourable to such a movement. They must recollect that between Jellalabad and Cabul there was the Khyber Pass; that for a distance of 153 miles

out of the 540, there was a country exceeding in difficulty, in respect to military communication, any other country on the face of the globe. Another fatal reverse such as that which had taken place at Cabul might have had the most prejudicial effect, for disasters of that kind were not merely doubled, but acted with a force infinitely increased, by repetition. I do say, then, that Lord Auckland, in my opinion, acted wisely in collecting the forces within British India, and taking time to deliberate as to what policy should be pursued. When the vote of thanks was proposed in this House to Lord Auckland, though I differed from that noble lord as to certain portions of his policy, yet, considering that that noble lord was fairly entitled to the public acknowledgments for the zeal which he had manifested in preparing and directing the resources of India in aid of the military operations in that country, I gave to that vote, so far as Lord Auckland was concerned, the support which I thought it deserved—to which I thought the noble lord entitled, and I have seen nothing since that time in the conduct of Lord Auckland, up to the time of his quitting India, with respect to those military operations, which makes me desirous of withdrawing the opinion I then expressed. However, that was the condition of affairs when the present governor-general succeeded to Lord Auckland. The first letter which Lord Ellenborough wrote on the subject of the policy which should be pursued is dated March 15, 1842. That despatch contained the precise views of the governor-general, and in it is the following passage. The paper I am about to quote is No. 200, and is at page 167 of the book. Lord Ellenborough goes on to say:—"Whatever course we may hereafter take must rest solely upon military considerations, and have, in the first instance, regard to the safety of the detached bodies of our troops at Jellalabad, at Ghuznee, at Khelat-i-Ghilzie, and Candahar, to the security of our troops now in the field from all unnecessary risk, and, finally to the re-establishment of our military reputation by the infliction of some signal and decisive blow upon the Affghans, which may make it appear to them, to our own subjects, and to our allies, that we have the power of inflicting punishment upon those who commit atrocities and violate their faith; and that we withdraw ultimately from Affghanistan, not from any deficiency of means to maintain our position, but because we are satisfied that the king we have set up has not, as we were erroneously led to imagine, the support of the nation over which he has been placed. But, while the facts before us justify the withdrawal of our troops from Affghanistan, and the refusal of all further assistance to Schah Soojah, they are yet not such as to make it consistent with our reputation to give our future support, as is suggested by Major Rawlinson, to Schah Kamram, and to make over Candahar to that nominal ruler of Herat, even were it consistent with prudence to engage in a new speculative enterprise beyond the Indus, which might render it necessary for us to retain, at an enormous cost, a large body of troops in the difficult country between that river and Candahar, for the purpose of maintaining in the country so made over to him a sovereign personally incapable and for many years unknown to its inhabitants, otherwise than by the fame of his degrading vices. We are of opinion that it would be erroneous to suppose that a forward position in Upper Affghanistan would have the effect of controlling the Sikhs, or that a forward position above the passes of Lower Affghanistan would have the effect of controlling the Beloochees and the Scindians, by the appearance of confidence and of strength. That which will really, and will alone control the Sikhs, the Beloochees, and the Scindians, and all the other nations beyond and within the Indus, is the knowledge that we possess an army, perfect in its equipment, possessed of all the means of movement, and so secure in its communications with the country from which its supplies and its reinforcements are drawn, as to be able at any time to act with vigour and effect against any enemy. In war, reputation is strength; but reputation is lost by the rash exposure of the most gallant troops under circumstances which render defeat more probable than victory; and a succession of reverses will dishearten any soldiers, and, most of all, those whose courage and devotion have been mainly the result of their confidence that they were always led to certain success. We would, therefore, strongly impress upon the commanders of the forces employed in Affghanistan and Scinde the importance of incurring no unnecessary risk, and of bringing their troops into action under circumstances which may afford full scope to the superiority they derive from their discipline. At the same time, we are aware that no great object can be accomplished without incur-

ring some risk; and we should consider that the object of striking a decisive blow at the Affghans, more especially if such blow could be struck in combination with measures for the relief of Ghuznee—a blow which might re-establish our military character beyond the Indus, and leave a deep impression of our power, and of the vigour with which it would be applied to punish an atrocious enemy—would be one for which risk might be justifiably incurred, all due and possible precaution being taken to diminish such necessary risk, and to secure decisive success. The commanders of the forces in Upper and Lower Affghanistan will, in all the operations they may design, bear in mind these general views and opinions of the Government of India. They will, in the first instance, endeavour to relieve all the garrisons in Affghanistan which are now surrounded by the enemy. The relief of these garrisons is a point deeply affecting the military character of the army, and deeply interesting the feelings of their country; but to make a rash attempt to effect such relief, in any case, without a reasonable prospect of success, would be to afford no real aid to the brave men who are surrounded, and fruitlessly to sacrifice other good soldiers, whose preservation is equally dear to the government they serve. To effect the release of the prisoners taken at Cabul is an object likewise deeply interesting in point of feeling and of honour. That object can, probably, only be accomplished by taking hostages from such part of the country as may be in, or may come into, our possession; and with reference to this object, and to that of the relief of Ghuznee, it may possibly become a question, in the event of Major-general Pollock's effecting a junction with Sir Robert Sale, whether the united force shall return to the country below the Khyber Pass, or take a forward position near Jellalabad, or even advance to Cabul. We are fully sensible of the advantages which would be derived from the re-occupation of Cabul, the scene of our great disaster and of so much crime, even for a week, of the means which it might afford of recovering the prisoners, of the gratification which it would give to the army, and of the effect which it would have upon our enemies. Our withdrawal might then be made to rest upon an official declaration of the grounds upon which we retired as solemn as that which accompanied our advance; and we should retire as a conquering, not as a defeated power; but we cannot sanction the occupation of an advanced position beyond the Khyber Pass by Major-general Pollock, unless that general should be satisfied that he can, without depending upon the forbearance of the tribes near the Pass, which, obtained only by purchase, must under all circumstances be precarious, and without depending upon the fidelity of the Sikh chiefs, or upon the power of those chiefs to restrain their troops, upon neither of which can any reliance be safely placed, feel assured that he can, by his own strength, overawe and overcome all who dispute the Pass, and keep up at all times his communication with Peshawur and the Indus; and we would caution Major-general Pollock, and all the officers commanding the troops in the field, not to place reliance upon, or to be biassed by, the representations of native chiefs, who may have been expelled from their country in consequence of their adherence to us, and who will naturally be ready to lead us into any danger by operations which may have the possible effect of restoring them to their former possessions."

Sir, it is evident from this letter, that Lord Ellenborough's main objects were, to relieve the garrisons, to rescue the prisoners, and to re-establish the military supremacy of the British arms, if even only for a time, in Cabul and Affghanistan; but that he did not contemplate a permanent occupation of Affghanistan. On the 15th of March, 1842, those were the objects and this was the policy which he contemplated. Those objects have been accomplished, and the policy has practically been carried out. I am quite aware that in the period that elapsed between the 15th of March and the successful result of those operations which he then contemplated, Lord Ellenborough did at one time take a different view of the policy of Indian affairs; and that he issued the order of the 19th of April to General Nott to withdraw from Candahar. But under what circumstances did he issue the order of the 19th of April? Here again, as in the case of Lord Auckland, I will call on the House to bear in mind the responsibility devolving upon the governor-general contemplating the fatal consequences that might arise from a repetition of such disasters as those which had but lately befallen our troops. On the 19th of April, Lord Ellenborough strongly recommended, and, indeed, directed General Nott to withdraw from Candahar, to rescue, if he could, the garrison of Ghuznee, to destroy the fortifications of Kelat-i-

Ghilzie, and to retire within the British frontier. When he gave this order on the 19th of April, he had just received intelligence of the fall of Ghuznee—had just received an account that Colonel Palmer, who commanded at Ghuznee, had found, or considered it to be impossible to maintain his position, and that he had surrendered Ghuznee to the force by which it was then besieged. At the same time, Lord Ellenborough received intelligence of the failure of General England to advance through the Bolan Pass for the purpose of assisting General Nott at Candahar. Thus, on the day that Lord Ellenborough wrote that letter, he had received information of two signal failures at two different points in the attempt made to relieve the pent-up garrisons in Afghanistan. Brigadier Wilde, with four regiments, had been driven back from the Khyber Pass; and General England, with a considerable force, had failed in forcing a passage through the Khojuk Pass, which lies between the Bolan Pass and Candahar. What were the letters, which at that very time, almost on that very day, General Pollock and General Nott were writing to Lord Ellenborough? It was on the 19th of April that he gave his directions to General Nott to withdraw from Candahar. He could not be correctly informed of the actual state of the armies in Afghanistan at that particular time. He knew that Ghuznee had surrendered. He knew that the passes between the Indus and Candahar had not been forced by General England, but that that general had met with discomfiture. He knew, also, the feeling that prevailed amongst some of the regiments of the army which was commanded by General Nott. These were the accounts which he received when he gave his orders of the 19th of April, written respectively by General Nott and General Pollock. General Pollock, writing from Jellalabad, on the 20th of April (the day after the issuing of the order), says:—"I have already stated my views with regard to the Khyber Pass. I have also shown, that from the system of supplying carriage-cattle, I have not the means of moving, and the country around cannot supply my wants. To establish depôts or strong posts at intervals on the road between this and Cabul, would so reduce the numerical strength of this force, that by the time it reached the capital, it would be too weak to effect the desired object. For several marches, no forage is procurable. Even if we had carriage, the conveyance of forage would so increase the number of animals to be protected, that I should much doubt our being able to convey them in safety; and, I confess, after the treachery we have experienced, I could have no confidence in any promises of support from an Afghan; he might engage to lay in forage at intervals, for the express purpose of leading us into a difficult position, and then glory in having served his own cause by bringing us to the verge of destruction. The devastation of a few villages in our vicinity, with all the grain and forage, would be a small matter in the eyes of an Afghan, if he could thereby destroy our force, and such a measure would assuredly go near to effect it. I have maturely considered the question of our advance by this road to Cabul, and I confess that I see too many difficulties to warrant our risking such a course. The force I have the honour to command, if well supplied, is ready to march anywhere, and if I could have advanced by the route of Candahar, our success would be certain."

This was written on the 20th of April. General Nott, of course, not being aware of the order that was written on the 19th of April, gives, on the 18th of April, this account of his position at Candahar:—"In the event of field operations, the deduction of these 3000 men would leave me scarcely 4000 troops, including this cavalry to oppose the enemy in the field, and to guard a long train of provision and carriage cattle; and, however distant the service from this important magazine, every particle of food must be carried with the force; thus crippling and retarding all its movements. The troops and establishments at Candahar are four months in arrears, and there is not a rupee in the treasury; nor can money be borrowed. We have no medicine for the sick and wounded; and in the event of much service in the field, I fear we should run short of musket-ammunition, although I have contrived to have a considerable quantity prepared from old and damaged powder; frequent application has been made to the authorities in Sindh, during the last four months, for treasure, ammunition, stores, medicines, and particularly for cavalry, but no aid whatever has been afforded. I want draught and baggage-cattle to enable me to move; but without money, in a country like this, I can neither purchase nor hire them. I have no cattle for moving even three regiments; during our field operations of last

month, both officers and men marched without tents. Under these circumstances, my difficulties were certainly great; but although I consider it to be my duty to state these facts, the government may rest assured of my best and unremitting exertions to carry into effect its views and instructions, and to uphold the reputation of our arms, and the honour of my country."

[Mr. Mangles: Read the next paragraph.] General Nott continues in these terms:—"Perhaps it is not within my province to observe, that, in my humble opinion, an unnecessary alarm has been created regarding the position of our troops in this country, and of the strength and power of the enemy we have to contend with. The enemy cannot face our troops in the field with any chance of success, however superior they may be in numbers, provided those precautions are strictly observed, which war, between a small body of disciplined soldiers, and a vast crowd of untrained, unorganized, and half-civilized people, constantly renders necessary."

I really do not wish to introduce a word that should reflect in any way upon those by whom Lord Ellenborough was preceded. The order of the 25th of February, recalling the previous orders, was issued by Lord Auckland, not by Lord Ellenborough. I do not wish upon this occasion to introduce any thing that may have the appearance of reflecting upon any part of Lord Auckland's conduct. I have stated what my impressions are with respect to the course pursued by Lord Auckland, and it is my wish not to introduce a word that might savour of party character, or bear the appearance of the slightest degree of injustice to those to whom I am politically opposed. General Nott continues,—“True, the British troops suffered a dreadful disaster at Cabul, and it is not for me to presume to point out why this happened, however evident I may conceive the reasons, and the long train of military and political events which led to the sad catastrophe.”

The hon. gentleman might challenge me to go on with the next sentence. What does General Nott say in that passage of his letter:—"Had I been reinforced with a single regiment of cavalry, I feel convinced that I could long since have tranquilized or subdued the rebellious feeling in the provinces dependent upon Candahar, and that a very few additional troops from Sindh, to garrison this extensive and important city, would have set me free from my present difficult position, and have enabled me at this moment to have been on my march to Ghuznee and to Cabul; but although near six months have elapsed since the outbreak at that city, no aid of any kind has been sent to me; and the circumstances I have now detailed, still confine me to this post and its immediate vicinity."

I really do not think it necessary or expedient to proceed with the quotation of passages of this nature. What I say is this, that these reports of the 18th of April and the 20th of April, from the respective commanding officers with regard to the state of the two armies, upon the efficiency of which our only hope of embarking in successful operations against Afghanistan depended, coming in addition to the accounts of the surrender of Ghuznee, and the failure of General England to force the Khojuk Pass, in my opinion vindicates the policy of the order given by Lord Ellenborough, under the impression that then existed on his mind on the 19th of April—that order being substantially to this effect:—"Do not, in the present inauspicious aspect of affairs, incur the great risk of advancing upon Cabul. General Pollock tells you that he cannot advance—that he cannot support you." I say that with the impressions which existed upon Lord Ellenborough's mind, it was true wisdom to give the order of the 19th of April, and that he deserves the commendation of this House for having given it. And he says most justly in another despatch:—"True it is, that I might conciliate public favour by directing an advance in the midst of these difficulties, but if by an act of precipitation of that kind, I were to compromise the safety of our empire in India, I should never during my existence cease to upbraid myself for refusing to take the responsibility of delaying the march of the troops."

I can hardly think it would be necessary for me to convince any gentleman who has read through these despatches—who has seen the devotion to the public service manifested by Lord Ellenborough in respect to provisioning the army, to detain the House at any greater length to show, nay, I should almost feel ashamed if I were to make any further endeavour to show, that upon that ground Lord Ellenborough is justly entitled to the expression of public thanks. What did Lord Ellenborough do with respect to provisioning the army? On the 16th September he says,—“Every



possible effort has been made to supply Major-general Pollock's force with carriage, and to provide for the expected wants of Major-general Nott's force, when it joins the army in the Cabul valley. In the ten weeks ending the 8th of September, there have been purchased 7,653 camels, and 5,026 mules and ponies; 1,265 Bringaree bullocks have been hired, and 1,000 camels; and I have reason to think that 1,500 more Bringaree bullocks have been hired at Peshawur, making in all 16,444 animals. The purchases of camels continue, and I have directed that every mule may be procured which can be deemed fit for service. I am satisfied that I shall have the entire concurrence of your committee in the opinion I have expressed to the commissary-general, that the army must be supplied, cost what it may; and that it is better to have a thousand animals too many, than a hundred too few. The losses of animals, however, must of necessity be so large that I have no hope that all my efforts will do more than provide for the absolute requirements of the retiring army. Camp equipages, clothing, shoes, medical and other comforts, are to be forwarded by these animals; and I trust the army will feel that it incurs no suffering which could have been obviated by the paternal care of the government."

Look, Sir, at the range from which it was necessary to obtain these supplies. Look at the exertions necessary in the course of ten weeks, to procure 10,000 beasts of burthen; and do not forget how the country out of which they were procured, had been exhausted by previous exertions of a similar nature. Do not forget that it was a field from which you could hardly hope to draw fresh supplies for a new emergency. What is the calculation of Major Todd, who inscribes the work he wrote to Lord Auckland? Major Todd states, that the loss of beasts of burthen between November 1838 and the same period of 1839, was not less than 32,000. Therefore, when you estimate the extent of the exertions which it became necessary to make, in order to procure a supply of 16,500 beasts of burthen, you must not forget that the loss sustained in that way by the operations of 1838 and 1839 amounted, according to the highest authority, to not less than 32,000. I feel most confident, therefore, that this House, whatever its opinion may be upon points of policy, will recognise the claim of Lord Ellenborough to a public acknowledgment, "For the ability and judgment with which the resources of the British empire in India have been applied in support of the military operations in Afghanistan."

That it will bear in mind the despatch of the 15th March—that it will bear in mind the objects which Lord Ellenborough contemplated on assuming the government of India, as he did amidst a great depression of popular feeling, and with a picture of most forbidding aspect—that it will bear in mind that his object was to relieve every garrison in Afghanistan, to release every prisoner, to re-occupy Cabul, and to prove to India and the world the supremacy and invincibility of British arms in that quarter of the world—that it will bear in mind that every object so contemplated was, within a period of eight or ten months, completely realised; and that Lord Ellenborough had the satisfaction of seeing the army, a portion of which had left the British frontier dispirited and full of fearful forebodings, return to the banks of the Sutlege full of spirit, joyous, triumphant, and in a state of the greatest efficiency. I feel too much confidence in the generosity of this House to believe, that any consideration, that any difference in political opinions, could influence it in refusing a just acknowledgment of public services, upon the ground on which I now ask for the acknowledgment to Lord Ellenborough. And I must take this opportunity of cautioning the House, although I know that this night's comments upon Lord Ellenborough's policy, or comments upon his conduct, will not influence it, when we are meeting upon this neutral field for the purpose of considering the claims of a public man to public thanks, on account of his conduct in support of great and important military operations—yet I feel it necessary to caution the House against the introduction of comments which, however just or true they may be believed to be by those who make them, may yet, in fact, be the occasion of producing most unfounded impressions against the parties towards whom they are directed. Ample opportunities will be afforded on other occasions, for any comment that hon. gentlemen may wish to make on any part of Lord Ellenborough's policy and conduct. An hon. gentleman has to-night given notice of a motion on one part of Lord Ellenborough's policy; but I think I can demonstrate to the House the impropriety of inferring that every thing it hears to the prejudice of Lord Ellenborough, is

necessarily true. The other night the noble lord opposite (Lord John Russell) made some comments upon the conduct of Lord Ellenborough with respect to the public servants in the employ of the East India Company. The noble lord was particularly severe upon the conduct of Lord Ellenborough to a gentleman of the name of Amos. The noble lord said that that gentleman had been employed in the instruction of her Majesty—that he was a gentleman of the highest character, of great attainment, and great qualification—that that gentleman went from this country a few years ago with a high character for legal acquirements; but that, well known as his attainments were, and high as he was known to stand in the estimation even of her Majesty, one of the first acts of Lord Ellenborough (as the noble lord was informed) was to insult Mr. Amos in such a manner as to induce that gentleman to throw up his situation. I am certain that, even if the noble lord were justified in making that assertion, you would not allow it to operate with you upon the present occasion; but I mention the circumstance to show you the necessity of waiting till you have all the evidence before you, before you lend an ear to any statements of this nature. It cannot be denied that a most unfavourable impression was made with respect to Lord Ellenborough by the statement to which I have referred. I do not say or suppose that it was the intention of the noble lord to produce such an impression, but such undoubtedly was the effect of his statement. He stated that Lord Ellenborough took the first opportunity of treating this gentleman of high attainments with such marked insult as to compel him to relinquish his situation. I was quite sure that the noble lord would not advance anything of a kind so calculated to prejudice a political opponent, acting under a deep responsibility at a great distance from home, and without the power of reply, unless he were perfectly convinced of the accuracy and truth of what he was asserting. My confidence in the noble lord's generosity satisfies me upon that point. But for the purpose of inculcating upon the House the necessity of pausing before it leaps to conclusions upon these *ex parte* statements, I will read a letter which has been put into my hands since the noble lord's statement was made, and which the writer leaves me at liberty to use. It is a letter from the wife of Mr. Amos, who, having read in the public papers a report of what had passed in this House writes, on the 12th of February, as follows:—

“ST. IBBS, HITCHIN, *February 12, 1843.*

“My dear Sir—You probably may have noticed in Lord John Russell's speech on Thursday last, that he asserted that Mr. Amos resigned his appointment in Calcutta in consequence of having been insulted by Lord Ellenborough. Now, as there is not a word of truth in this statement, I think it right to contradict it, at least amongst Mr. Amos's old and valued friends. When he went out to India five years ago, Mr. Amos always intended to resign in 1843, and I am sure nothing would induce him to remain at Calcutta another year; now that all his family are here; his children just springing into manhood, and requiring all a father's care and example. As to Lord Ellenborough's conduct, it has been one of unvaried politeness and civility. I believe they were mutually pleased with each other; and when Mr. Amos wrote to Lord Ellenborough in the autumn, when he was up the country, saying it was his intention to resign, Lord Ellenborough replied, that he was extremely sorry to lose so very agreeable a colleague. I hope you will excuse my troubling you with this long note, but I could not feel easy until I had done so.

“Believe me, my dear Sir, yours very truly,

“MARTHA AMOS.”

A more convincing proof cannot be offered of the injustice which you must commit, if you permit vague assertions of this kind—assertions incapable of proof, but believed to be true by those who make them—to influence you in withholding from Lord Ellenborough that which I believe, in common with the highest authority in the world, to be most just, and due on account of these military operations. So much for Lord Ellenborough and for Lord Ellenborough's claim to public thanks. I hope I have most strictly kept my word, and avoided all reference to mere political matters. With respect to the claims of the gallant officers, under whose directions these exploits have been performed, I am perfectly convinced, that upon that head there can be no difference of opinion. It is impossible to read these details of service

—it is impossible to read the accounts of General Pollock—of General Nott, and of General Sale, without being inspired by all those feelings which are connected with the honour and military glory of our country. I am sure the House will excuse me, if, with respect to each of these officers and their claims upon public gratitude, I make some remarks. I begin with General Pollock. General Pollock took the command of the force intended to rescue General Sale early in the month of February. He arrived at Peshawur on the 5th of February, 1842. He had, then, of course, heard of the failure of Brigadier Wilde. On the day that he arrived at Peshawur, he found that in Brigadier Wilde's brigade there were not less than 1,000 sick. The day after he arrived he went to the camp at once. He found that the number of sick in the camp, on the 12th of February, was 1,800 men. What was the course he pursued? On the day after his arrival, postponing every other concern, he visited all the hospitals, and saw all the surgeons with a view of ascertaining from them, if possible, the cause of this sickness. He says—and these things do him honour—this is the way to inspire confidence, this is the way to show that you are not merely contemplating the means of obtaining the thanks of parliament by brilliant exploits, but that you are attending to the comforts of your men; this, I say, is the way to inspire confidence, and I mention these things for the honour of the distinguished man by whom they were performed—I would even rather dwell upon them than upon his military success, because they are, in truth, the elements of future success. This, I repeat, is the way to inspire confidence. General Pollock, writing on the 12th of February, says, "I shall visit their hospitals frequently, and by adding in any way to their comforts, show that I feel an interest in them." General Pollock adds, "There has been some unpleasant feeling amongst them, which I hope has entirely subsided." He had heard of the dejection which prevailed amongst some of the Sepoy regiments. What was the course he took? He saw every officer; he visited the regiments; he determined not to act with harshness towards the men. Not calling them to courts martial, he depended upon the influence of reason with them, and in the course of a very short time, he succeeded in completely re-establishing the confidence which had been so deeply shaken. The Sepoy regiments were for a time depressed by the expected difficulties of the Khyber Pass—when they found some of their countrymen coming from Cabul with dreadful stories of the cruelty to which they had been exposed—when they declared their readiness to meet any enemy in the open field—when they said, "We will advance to Jellalabad for the rescue of General Sale, but we tell you fairly that the idea of advancing to Cabul presses upon our spirits." I hope the House will not think too harshly of these men, when it considers the noble manner in which they retrieved their character. If we wanted any thing else to add to the interest of these scenes, it would be found in their association with the ancient history of the world. I was struck by the recollection, that it was in the self-same region, and in the midst of similar scenes, that one of the greatest of ancient conquerors, 2,300 years ago, was displaying his power, and encountering the same difficulties that for a time depressed the spirit and damped the courage of our Sepoys. And I was struck by the account given by the Roman historian of the dejection which prevailed even in the ranks of the Macedonian phalanx, when they had to encounter and overcome the difficulties of the same terrible region—to cross the very same rivers, to force the very same passes. This is the speech attributed to Alexander, and which the historian tells us he found it necessary to address to the gallant military force which accompanied him. He found it necessary not to punish but to address them. He did so in these words:

*"Date hoc precibus meis et tandem obstinatum rumpe."*

He observed that the passage of these rivers of the Punjaub, and the accounts of the formidable character of the enemy, had shaken the confidence of his troops. Wherefore he says:

*"Ubi est ille clamor alacritatis vestræ index? Ubi ille meorum Macedonum vultus? Non agnosco vos milites."*

He addressed them in vain. The historian says,

*"Quumque illi in terram demissis capitis tacere perseverarent."*

He then said to them,

*"Ite reduces domos; ite deserto rege ovantes. Ego hic à vobis desperatæ victoriæ, aut honestæ mortis locum inveniam."*

These were the words which Alexander addressed to his fainting troops. Amidst these very rivers of the Punjab—amidst these very Affghan passes, Alexander pursued a course similar to that which at another period was adopted by another military commander—he attempted not by severity—not by enforcing the rigid rules of war, but by reasoning with his men to revive their drooping spirits; and he succeeded. If the Macedonian phalanx needed such an address from the mighty conqueror who led them, let us not judge too harshly of our sepoy, if in the midst of similar difficulties they yielded for a moment to a sense of depression. Now, what were the military services of General Pollock? He forced the Khyber Pass by a series of operations carried on from the 7th to the 16th of April. He reached Jellalabad on the 16th of April, although in the Pass 10,000 men had been opposed to him. He remained with General Sale for a time; then advanced towards Cabul, reached Gundamuck in August, and on the 8th of September defeated the Ghilzies. On the 8th of September he was met at Tezeen by Akhbar Khan, with a force of 10,000 men, on the very field of action where lay the bodies of those who had been massacred with ferocious cruelty, and gross breach of faith—on that very spot, General Pollock, aided by General Sale, was completely successful in vindicating the honour and invincibility of the British arms, and on the 16th of September General Pollock entered Cabul, the British flag was hoisted on the Bala Hissar, and the national anthem of "God save the Queen," resounded through the streets of the re-captured city. In whatever point of view his services is regarded—whether as relates to his conduct in the field, his judgment, his discretion, or the happy skill with which he revived the drooping spirit of his soldiers—I think the House will unanimously award to General Pollock the highest distinction which a military man can receive, and record their public acknowledgment to him for his gallantry and perseverance in the face of such serious difficulties. With respect to General Nott, I think that no one can have read the letters written by him in the course of the severe trial to which he was exposed, without finding in that correspondence internal evidence that he must be a man highly deserving of public confidence. General Nott, when the insurrection at Cabul broke out, occupied Candahar, and under his command were the inferior stations of Ghuznee and Khelat-i-Ghilzie. On the 7th of March a powerful force was collected around Candahar. General Nott left 2,600 men in the garrison, and marched out to attack the enemy, who were collected under a prince of the name of Suftur Jung. He came up with them on the 9th, and defeated them; and he states this remarkable and most creditable fact, that during a march of five days, he being weak in cavalry, and the enemy having 6,000 horse, such was the discipline and steadiness of the troops, that not one camel was taken, and not a particle of baggage was missing. On the 29th of May, Ackbar Khan having effected a junction with Prince Suftur Jung, General Nott, who was then reinforced by General England, left General England in command of the city, and advanced to attack the enemy. On that day the Ghazees had 8,000 men occupying a strong position, and 2,000 men guarding the Baba Wullee Pass and the road leading to their camp. General Nott was again completely successful. Whilst he was carrying on these operations an assault was made upon Khelat-i-Ghilzie. A captain was in command there, whose name ought to be mentioned, Captain Craigie. The force under his command consisted almost exclusively of sepoys. He was attacked by two divisions of 2,000 men; but the attack was repelled by the discipline and steadiness of the small band which he commanded. These are the men, captains and lieutenants—you cannot include their names in the vote of thanks—but these are the men, and I will mention their names, who are to constitute our future commanders; and I know that although they cannot be included nominally in our vote, yet that it will be gratifying to them, humble as their rank may be, to know that when these thanks are proposed, our gratitude is not exclusively confined to those who were actually at the head of our armies. General Nott, availing himself of the discretion that was given to him, moved from Candahar on the 10th of August; on the 30th he defeated Shumshooden Khan, about twenty-seven miles from Ghuznee; on the 6th of September he took Ghuznee and destroyed the fortifications; on the

17th of September he was within five miles of Cabul, and a few days after he effected a junction with General Pollock, who had reached that place. Notwithstanding he had been ordered to evacuate Candahar, in consequence of the disastrous intelligence which had reached the Governor-general, still, during six months of adverse fortune and complete silence, that brave man's gallant spirit never quailed. It was painful to him to think of retiring; he thought of nothing but of retrieving the honour of the British name; and I do not confine my admiration of General Nott merely to his military prowess and skill, but I say that the mind which conceived the expressions contained in the letter addressed by him to General England are proofs of a noble spirit equal to any emergency, and command the highest acknowledgments on the part of a grateful country. In that letter, written also on the 18th of April, 1842, after the failure of General England, he says:—"The troops at Candahar are four months in arrears, and we have not one rupee in the treasury. In the event of much field service, we should run short of musket-ammunition; and we are without medicine for the sick and wounded. I think it absolutely necessary that a strong brigade of 2,500 men should be immediately pushed from Quetta to Candahar with the supplies."

And, further on, he observes:—"The people of this country cannot withstand our troops in the open field. I am well aware that war cannot be made without loss, but I yet hope that British troops can oppose Asiatic armies without defeat; and I feel and know that British officers should never despair of punishing the atrocious and treacherous conduct of a brutal enemy. I feel obliged to you for pointing out the many difficulties attending our position, but you are well aware that it is our first and only duty to overcome difficulties, when the national honour and our military reputation are so deeply concerned. Nothing can be accomplished without effort and perseverance. In reply to the last paragraph of your letter of the 10th instant, I have only to observe, that I have not yet contemplated falling back; without money, I can neither pay the long arrears due to the troops, nor procure carriage for field operations."

I say, considering all these circumstances—considering the separation of that man—the silence of six months which had occurred, and the failure of General England—that the man who wrote that letter is a man of whom this country may be justly proud—that his name will be treasured in the memory of his country, and that this letter will be one of its most honourable records. And when Lord Ellenborough offered to General Nott the option of deciding upon the route of Ghuznee and Cabul, I think that the letter which General Nott wrote in answer, after fully considering all the advantages and disadvantages of an advance or a retreat, and stating that he had made his mind up neither respecting an advance or a retreat, but that if an opportunity offered, he would make decisive efforts to re-establish the British name and authority in India—I think that such a letter is a worthy companion to the letter of the 18th of April, addressed to General England. The letter is No. 416 in the printed papers, and is dated Candahar, July 26, 1842. After all the abhorrence which the treachery and cruelty of the Affghans towards our troops must naturally have excited in the minds of the British in India, this letter contains the most honourable testimony, not merely to the intellectual, but to the moral character of General Nott. Amidst all the difficulties he had to contend with, and all the provocations he had received, he writes—"I am most anxious, notwithstanding the conduct of the Affghan chiefs, that our army should leave a deep impression on the people of this country of our character for forbearance and humanity."

I am sure the House will excuse my taking up its time, if, on a subject so deeply interesting to our feelings, I am desirous of leaving upon record the sense which the country entertains of the services rendered to it by these men. It is impossible that, having mentioned the names of Pollock and Nott, I should omit the mention of another name, and the services rendered by another gallant man—Sir Robert Sale. From the day he occupied Jellalabad to the day on which he advanced triumphantly to Cabul, his operations were distinguished by the most indomitable spirit of valour, endurance, and devotedness to his country's honour. Although with a force far inferior in numbers to those under the other generals, yet never were deeds more glorious to the character of the British arms achieved than were those which, during the period of ten months that intervened between the

occupation by Sir Robert Sale of Jellalabad on the 11th of November, 1841, to the 7th of September, 1842, when he advanced leading his small but illustrious army to meet their brethren in arms at Cabul, were achieved by that gallant band. General Sale took possession of Jellalabad on the 11th November, 1841. He came there surrounded by thousands of hostile people. He says, in one of his letters, that he occupied Jellalabad with only two days' provision. In his march from Cabul, choice was given to him either to return to Cabul or to go on to Jellalabad, and he most wisely determined to go to Jellalabad. When he got there he found the walls of the city, 2,800 yards in circumference, and all the ramparts, entirely ruined, the parapets thrown down, the bastions destroyed, and the fortifications, for upwards of 400 yards, entirely dismantled. From the extent of the destruction of the walls, it was impossible for a man to show his face in consequence of being totally without any cover. In the course of that same day, the place was surrounded by 5,000 insurgents; on the next day General Sale heard of the failure of Brigadier-general Wilde, while at the very same moment a considerable portion of Shah Soojah's troops, under General Sale's command, had shown indications of a doubtful character, so that he was obliged to part with them. Amidst all these difficulties and privations, the men laboured with such a degree of cheerfulness and devotion, that in the early part of February they had succeeded in re-establishing the defences. Three of the gates were retrenched, and a ditch, ten feet in depth and twelve feet in width, was dug entirely round the town, the men handling the sword at one time and the pickaxe and spade at another; they completed the parapets, raising them six or seven feet, so that by the 16th or 17th of February, the troops were exulting in the success of their operations, and contemplating with joy the completion of their defences and the strength of their powers of resistance. On the 19th of February, 1842, there was an earthquake, which utterly destroyed every thing. By that shock, all that had been done, besides three parts of the town itself, was destroyed, and that gallant army had the mortification to see that, by the visitation of one night, all the results of their past labours had vanished. Within the space of little more than a month, a hundred shocks occurred within the hearing of the town. But, undismayed by this reverse, the troops renewed their labours, and repaired the ruined walls, and never for one moment did they abate in their exertions except upon the approach of the enemy, when it became necessary for those gallant men to attack and repulse them. Ackbar Khan, flushed with success, advanced from Cabul, and arrived before Jellalabad. The earthquake took place on the 19th of February, when all the works and three parts of the town were destroyed. On the 21st and 22nd of February, General Sale attacked Ackbar Khan; and from that time to April, he and his troops were kept in a state of apprehension, and, though not actually engaged, they were constantly on the watch, in order that they might be prepared to resist the attack of Ackbar Khan. General Pollock was, during this, making every exertion to relieve General Sale and the troops at Jellalabad. On the 7th of April, General Sale heard the firing of guns in the camp of Ackbar Khan. It was rumoured, that the firing was on account of the failure of General Pollock making his way through the Khyber Pass. General Sale had reason to believe, that it was either on that account, or else an indication that Ackbar Khan intended to withdraw. General Sale, therefore, determined to attack Ackbar Khan, who had the command of 16,000 troops, while General Sale's force only amounted to 1,800. The attack was made, and it was entirely successful; the enemy were routed; and although the enemy bore the attack with great courage, the valour of the British troops was triumphant, and victory was the consequence of their enterprise. And that victory would have been almost a cause of unqualified rejoicing, if it had not been purchased at the cost of the life of one of those gallant spirits who have shed increased lustre on the British name, at the cost of the life of Colonel Dennie, who led the British troops against the enemy, and succeeded; but that success was dearly purchased by the sacrifice of his own life. It was a loss, however, in some degree consoled for by the glorious manner of it, and which has been described by a spirit as excellent as his own, who, in offering consolation to his family and friends, says,—“True it is he has lost his life, but he lost it on the field of battle, and in the hour of victory.” That is the consolation which Sir Robert Sale offers to the friends and family of the brave Colonel Dennie. I wish it had been otherwise. I

wish it had been possible that either Colonel Dennie's life could have been spared, or that he might have been consoled in the hour of death by the knowledge, that on account of his noble bravery and of his high character—having no other interest or influence than the just influence and interest which such courage and devotion as his ought always to command—the Queen had signified her own special and personal wish that Colonel Dennie should have been one of her own aides-de-camp. On the 16th of April, 1842, General Sale was relieved by General Pollock. On the 20th of August, he advanced towards Cabul, and on the 18th of September, he witnessed on the Beymaroo Heights the victory of Cabul. We are now acknowledging military services; but I never should excuse myself if, in mentioning the name of Sir Robert Sale, I did not record my admiration of the character of a woman who has shed lustre on her sex—Lady Sale, his wife. The names of Sir Robert and of Lady Sale will be familiar words with the people of this country. I hold in my hand a memorandum of events which occurred in the neighbourhood of Cabul, from the 7th of November, written by Lady Sale, and a document more truly indicative of a high, a generous, and a gallant spirit I never read. There was an officer at that time at Cabul who stood in the relation of son-in-law to Sir Robert Sale—his name was Sturt. He held no higher rank than that of lieutenant, and died young; but he lived long enough to establish also a name which will long be remembered. Will the House permit me to read an account which, writing to her husband, Sir Robert Sale, she gives of his merits. She says,—“Sturt was sent by the general with a message to Ackbar Khan; he was stabbed in four places—his face, his shoulder, his arm, and in his side.”

This was on the 4th of November. She says,—“Sturt is able to speak; his wound in the shoulder is worse; he is weak, but his side is not so bad. The lungs are uninjured; his face wound is near the corner of his eye. He was struck on the bone with such force that he was stunned for a moment.”

On the 6th of November, two days after he received his wounds, Lady Sale writes,—“Sturt insisted, weak as he was, on going to the general, as there was no engineer there but himself. The general gave him leave to do as he pleased.”

On the 7th of November, she says,—“Sturt's wounds are doing well, but he overworks his strength. He cannot yet open his mouth. His tongue has greatly suffered, and all nourishment is given with a spoon. He is out all day. The soldiers lead him about. Last night, he did not go to bed till one o'clock, and then he was wakened up just afterwards, the general requiring his assistance.”

Who, that reads this, can fail to express his admiration at such noble conduct? His death is thus described by Lieutenant Eyre. He says, speaking of a certain attack made by Ackbar Khan—“Providentially the whole escaped, with the exception of Lady Sale, who received a slight wound in the arm. The rear-guard, consisting of her Majesty's 44th and 54th Native Infantry, suffered severely; and at last, finding that delay was only destruction, they followed the general example, and made the best of their way to the front. Another horse-artillery gun was abandoned, and the whole of its artillerymen slain. Captain Anderson's eldest girl, and Captain Boyd's youngest boy, fell into the hands of the Affghans. It is supposed that 3,000 souls perished in the pass, amongst whom were Captain Paton, assistant quartermaster-general; and Lieutenant St. George, 37th Native Infantry; Majors: Griffiths, 37th Native Infantry, and Scott, her Majesty's 44th; Captains: Bott, 5th Cavalry, and Troup, brigade-major, Shah's force; Dr. Cardew, and Lieutenant Sturt, engineers, were wounded, the latter mortally. This fine young officer had nearly cleared the defile when he received his wound, and would have been left on the ground to be hacked to pieces by the Ghazees, who followed in the rear to complete the work of slaughter, but for the generous intrepidity of Lieutenant Mein, of her Majesty's 13th Light Infantry, who, on learning what had befallen him, went back to his succour, and stood by him for several minutes, at the imminent risk of his own life, vainly entreating aid from the passers-by. He was at length joined by Serjeant Deane, of the Sappers, with whose assistance he dragged his friend on a quilt through the remainder of the pass, when he succeeded in mounting him on a miserable pony, and conducted him in safety to the camp, where the unfortunate officer lingered till the following morning, and was the only man of the whole force who received Christian burial. Lieutenant Mein was himself at this very time

suffering from a dangerous wound in the head, received in the previous October, and his heroic disregard of self, and fidelity to his friend in the hour of danger, are well deserving of a record in the annals of British valour and virtue."

It is but just, Sir, that the name of Lieutenant Mein should be mentioned with honour in the House of Commons. I shall not regret having noticed his generous act, since it has called forth so general and generous an expression of sympathy towards that brave and good man; for these are the instances, (and proud am I to know that there are many of them) of a generous devotion and fidelity displayed by the British soldier when engaged in the arduous service of his country. I am thankful for the attention which the House has paid to me. I do trust that I shall have convinced this House, previously prepared, I am sure, to embrace the conviction, that all parties concerned in these military operations, for the services they rendered to their country, are entitled to the gratitude and thanks of this House. It is impossible to contemplate these services without feeling proud of the British name. When we recollect what was going on in another quarter in that portion of the world, that while we were thus vindicating the honour of the British name in the north-west of India, we were conducting with consummate skill, at a great sacrifice, and with complete success, military and naval operations in China, it is impossible to contemplate the events in Asia in the year 1842, without being truly proud of the conduct and courage of our countrymen. I am willing to believe that these unquestionable proofs of the military reputation of England—of the United Kingdom—notwithstanding the long interval of peace, stands as high as it did during the excitement of the war, and I would fain hope that the decisive proofs which we have given, that our energies and military virtues are unabated, will constitute a great additional guarantee of continued peace. But if they fail doing that, and if in the maintenance of the national interests, or the vindication of the national honour, it shall be necessary to rouse those exertions, and to make them on a more extended scale, then I feel the utmost confidence that these gallant exploits are a proof that every interest of England will be maintained, and that English honour will be vindicated, in whatever quarter of the globe it may be infringed or violated. The right hon. baronet, in conclusion, moved the following resolutions:—

"That the thanks of this House be given to the right hon. Lord Ellenborough, Governor-general of the British possessions in the East Indies, for the ability and judgment with which the resources of the British empire in India have been applied in the support of the military operations in Afghanistan.

"That the thanks of this House be given to Major-general Sir George Pollock, G.C.B.; to Major-general Sir William Nott, G.C.B.; to Major-general Sir John M'Caskill, K.C.B.; to Major-general Sir Robert Henry Sale, G.C.B.; to Major-general Richard England, and the other officers of the army, both European and Native, for the intrepidity, skill, and perseverance displayed by them in the military operations in Afghanistan, and for their indefatigable zeal and exertions throughout the late campaign.

"That this House doth highly approve and acknowledge the valour and patient perseverance displayed by the non-commissioned officers and private soldiers, both European and Native, employed in Afghanistan, and that the same be signified to them by the commanders of the several corps, who are desired to thank them for their gallant behaviour."

Motion agreed to *nem. con.* and it was ordered that Mr. Speaker transmit the resolutions of the House to the Governor-general of India, and that his lordship be requested to communicate the same to the several officers referred to therein.

## THE NEW POOR-LAW.

FEB. 23, 1843.

Mr. Walters moved a series of resolutions condemnatory of the existing mode of administering relief, and calling upon the House to demand such a reconstruction of the existing system as would make it conformable to Christianity, sound policy, and the ancient constitution of the realm.



SIR ROBERT PEEL:—The hon. and gallant officer (Mr. Borthwick) says it is a misapprehension to suppose that the present law is founded on the act of Elizabeth, and challenges us to enter into a comparison of one act with the other. Now, Sir, I will accept the challenge of the hon. and gallant officer, and I will endeavour to show to him, as I think successfully, that the present law is not, as he appears to think, at variance with the law of Elizabeth; and if I shall succeed in proving this, I think I shall render it somewhat difficult for the hon. and gallant gentleman to vote for the resolutions of the hon. member for Nottingham, which he calls upon the House to support as being in consonance as well with the law of Elizabeth as with true Christian principles. By the terms "the ancient constitution of the realm," I think I understood the hon. member rightly to mean, not our form of political government, but the rights confided and guaranteed to the poor of this country by the act of Elizabeth. Now, I beg to call the attention of the House to what were the particular enactments of that law. The hon. and gallant gentleman who spoke last, would lead the House to suppose that there was something particularly tender, something extremely merciful and benevolent, towards the poor in that statute. [General Johnson: No! no!] No! no! Sir, the hon. and gallant gentleman challenged a comparison between the new law and the statute of Elizabeth. Did he not say, that in the new law we had departed from that statute, and that the poor now ceased to possess those rights to which by that statute they were entitled? I am sure I state the hon. and gallant gentleman's arguments correctly. The same arguments were put forward by speaker after speaker in this discussion; and when I am about to accept the challenge thrown out by the hon. and gallant gentleman, he interrupts me. It has certainly been assumed, that the legislature of the present day have subjected the poor of this country to hardships from which they were exempt at more remote periods of our history. Now let us see what was done in respect to the poor in the reign of Elizabeth. I am not now contending, that if there were hardships in the reign of Elizabeth, that is a reason why they should continue now. I am only dealing with the positive statement, that the present law is much more harsh in its operation than the law of Elizabeth, and my object will be answered if I disprove that statement. See what was enacted with respect to cottages in the reign of Elizabeth. The legislature wished, as far as possible, to discourage the construction of cottages, and of habitations for the poor; and, accordingly, a law was passed, prohibiting the erection of any new cottage unless the builder of the cottage attached to it in fee simple four acres of ground. The legislature, moreover, provided, with respect to all cottages actually existing at the time, that none of them should be inhabited, unless they were inhabited by a gamekeeper for the protection of deer, or by a shepherd for the protection of sheep, that shepherd having no family; and, also, that all such previously existing cottages should be inhabited by one family only, and that that family should not be allowed to increase its numbers. Is it not quite clear, that the condition of attaching four acres of land in fee-simple to all cottages that were thenceforward to be built, was intended as a prohibition to the building of cottages? And yet such a reservation was made and enacted by the 31st of Elizabeth. I now come to speak of the 43rd of Elizabeth. What did that law enact? Why, this; that overseers should be enabled to put to work all poor persons who were able to work, but who had no occupation, and were incapable of maintaining themselves. They were enabled to put those persons to work, at the parish expense, at the manufacture of flax, hemp, and iron. Nothing is said respecting the mode in which they were to work. There was no prohibition to employing them in workhouses. There was no obligation, but, at the same time, there was no prohibition against their being so employed. The overseers were at liberty to find them employment at their own homes. Work was the test of poverty, and the condition upon which relief was to be afforded. With respect to the impotent poor, the overseers were empowered to take them from their homes, and place them in something corresponding to a workhouse. All the blind, the lame, and the impotent, so far from being left at home, were placed at the mercy of the overseers. The overseers were empowered to purchase houses, and place them in those houses, while they were compelled by the enactments of the 31st of Elizabeth, to prevent more than one family from occupying each cottage existing previous to that act. An exemption, however, was made in respect to parish cot-

tages, in which the overseers were authorised to place as many families as they pleased. Then what were the merciful enactments of the 31st of Elizabeth, respecting children, and what the power given to overseers under that act? Why, this, that whenever they determined that certain parties were unable to maintain their children, they were empowered to take those children from their parents, and bind them apprentices. But that is not all: they might take the children of any person whom they thought incompetent to maintain his family, and bind the man child, as he was called, in any remote part of the kingdom, where he would be required to work for another person—for how long, think you? until he had attained the age of twenty-six years; while, in the case of the female child, she was to remain an apprentice, severed from the bosom of her family, and removed from the protection of her parents, until she had reached the age of twenty-one years, or until she was married. Now, taking the present law as a whole, I must say, that it is much more merciful. Would you tolerate, now, that the overseers of a parish should be enabled to take the children, not of persons receiving relief, but of any persons whom they might consider unable to maintain their children, and dispose of those children in the manner I have described, through a fear that they might become a burden to the parish? Do you tolerate, now, that children should be torn from their parents, by the authority of the overseers, and by the same authority, be sent to Cornwall or to Northumberland, and there bound apprentices until they are twenty-six years of age, or in the case of females, until they are married? There is no obligation on the overseers, by this act of Elizabeth, to employ persons for whom work was found in any particular house, and so the act continued—but it did not continue to the date of the new Poor-law. Hon. gentlemen have assumed that with the new poor-law originated the workhouse test, in lieu of the labour test; but, so far from that being the truth, 120 years ago, in the 9th of George I., owing to the gross abuses which had arisen out of the mode of employing the poor in parishes, owing to the great expenses which were incurred in those parishes, and to the charges connected with the manufacture of hemp, flax, and iron—in 1722, owing to those abuses, another act was passed which enabled the overseers to provide a house, wherein the able-bodied poor should work, and which expressly enacted that in case an able-bodied poor man refused to work within that house, he should forfeit his entire claim to relief. That act applied the workhouse test in lieu of the labour test. Upon the combined operation and experience of those two acts, the 43rd of Elizabeth and the 9th of George I., the latter act having been passed 120 years ago, founded on the gross abuses of the overseers in vestries, purchasing the articles I have named, and giving them out to the poor without accounting for the profits, if profits there were, and on the gross misapplication of the public funds, that act having been the first act which applied the workhouse test in lieu of the labour test, and having been so continued until the new Poor-law—upon the experience of these two acts, and upon the principle which the latter had already established, was the question dealt with by the government, and the new Poor-law enacted. In consequence of the inconvenience of having the management of the poor confided to individual parishes, another principle was adopted by the 9th of George I., and followed in the present Poor-law—that of enabling parishes to unite for the purpose of having common workhouses wherein to employ the poor. I think I have succeeded in showing that the present law, as regards the workhouse test, is not a new law, and that it is not, as it is said to be, at variance with the constitution of the country—if by the word “constitution” we are to understand ancient laws which have been continued for the maintenance and benefit of the people. The resolutions now before the House also appeared to assume that the existing law is founded strictly upon certain suggestions which were offered for the consideration of the government. It is absolutely necessary that a government, before it matures any plan, should seek for, and should procure suggestions. I will venture to say, that no great measure has ever passed without the aid of such suggestions, which were afterwards considered and put into shape. But is it fair, even if those suggestions come into another person’s possession in the most legitimate way, that one suggestion should be taken, and it should then be assumed that they had been acted upon by the government? Suppose, however, it should turn out that the suggestion has been rejected. Can any one be so unjust as to say, that a suggestion offered to the government and rejected

—which the government refused to adopt—is it not too much to ask the House of Commons to resolve that the suggestion so rejected is that on which the measure of the government is based? In the first place I object, even if an hon. member were in possession of memoranda or a draft presented for the consideration of the government, to produce any such paper, because it would be very prejudicial to the preparation of great measures if that House should consent to recognise the principle that all the private information on which it is founded or acquired during the preparation should be produced. But it is said the paper was printed. Why, to be sure it was printed. When fourteen or fifteen gentlemen meet together to consider a long or elaborate paper, it is usual to have it printed for their use, but although it was printed, it was considered as confidential as if it had been written. From nothing could greater inconvenience arise than if papers of a confidential nature, containing suggestions, whether they were adopted or, as in this case, not adopted, should be called for and produced. Let me take an instance from private life of the draft of a settlement or of a covenant returned unapproved of, could any thing be more unjust than to implicate a man in the contents if it were rejected by him? With regard to these resolutions, it is declared that the recommendations alluded to,—“Applicable alike to every class of the poor, and enjoining the indiscriminate reduction of their physical comforts to the lowest endurable point, are shown, by the subsequent orders and practice of the Poor-law Commissioners, to form the real, though unavowed basis of the present system of Poor-law relief.”

That is to say, that the refusal of out-door relief forms the basis of the present law. Now my right hon. friend the secretary for the home department (Sir James Graham) has shown that during the last year 221,000 persons has received in-door relief, and 1,207,000 persons have received out-door relief. How is it possible, then, to say that the suggestion to put down out-door relief is the basis of the existing law, when five out of six cases of relief under it are cases of out-door relief? How can it be said that this law is more severe than the Poor-law in any other country? I will venture to assert, it can be demonstrated that each poor person thus relieved received more, in reference to the riches of the country—a much larger sum—than persons in the same situation in any other country on the face of the earth. I am not now speaking of the law expenses, of the expenses incurred in the construction of the poor-houses, or of the interest to be paid for the money necessary for such construction; I am speaking of the money exclusively applied for the relief of the poor. In the year 1842, the number of 1,429,000 persons received relief, 221,000 in the work-house, and 1,207,000 out of the workhouse. The sum appropriated for this relief was £4,036,000. On an average of three years 1,309,000 persons had been relieved, and the sum of £3,887,000 had been distributed. Why that was nearly £3 a-head received by each poor person. If you take into consideration the condition of the paupers in the other countries on the face of the globe, and made an allowance for the difference of wealth, he doubted whether in any country the poor received more. I am surprised to hear the speech of the learned gentleman the member for Cocker-mouth (Mr. Aglionby); I have seen him upon several occasions rise above party considerations, and vote according to the dictates of his own mind. When I heard the learned member's speech, and his intention to vote for these resolutions, my surprise was so great I could scarcely express it. The hon. member may measure the extent of my respect for him by the extent of my surprise. The hon. member said he had voted for the Poor-law; he approved of the principle on which it was founded; he had expected from it great good; the hon. member said, that, upon the whole, he had not been disappointed—that upon the whole it had performed the object for which it was enacted—it had tended to increase the comfort and elevate the condition of the poor. If the hon. and learned member had said that, as a bill was to be introduced to remedy any defects in the law, he would give notice of his intention to vote in favour of the remedies for all those defects, he could have understood the hon. member. [Mr. Aglionby had meant to say so.] The hon. and learned gentleman has taken every opportunity of supporting the Poor-law, his opinion was that its operation had been beneficial; he had not been disappointed upon the whole, although in some cases he found errors; he found that the condition of the poor under the operation of the bill had been good; and then he said he would give his vote for a resolution declaring that,—“The suffering already caused

by the partial enforcement (of the principles), and the amount of out-door relief, in spite of them, still administered, show their provisions to have been at once cruel and impracticable."

And not only this, but the hon. member went the length of voting in the last resolution that,—“It is expedient to demand such a reconstruction of the existing system as shall make it conformable to Christianity, sound policy, and the ancient constitution of this realm.”

A man who denounces the law altogether ought to vote for these resolutions; but that an admirer of the law, that one who thought it had been beneficial in operation and tended altogether to the improvement of the condition of the poor, should give his vote for resolutions which condemn the law, and demand its total and complete repeal, recollecting, at the same time, what had been the uniform practice in former times, does fill me with complete surprise. Does the hon. member not think that he will damage a law, which, speaking generally, has been beneficial in its operation, and that upon the whole it has increased the physical comforts of the poor? As we have got a law of this kind, let us take care how we denounce it as not conformable to Christianity. I have still confidence, however, in the hon. and learned member to believe that he will not oppose the law, which, on the whole, has worked well, and will not vote with the hon. member for Finsbury, who denounces the law altogether. The hon. member for Finsbury, full of the milk of human kindness, began his speeches with charges and imputations. He said that it was most unparliamentary—nay, more than that, that it was unjust to establish an inquisition, and to judge of men, not only by their conduct, but to dive into the recesses of their hearts, and then impute motives to them; and in a few minutes after he went on to say, that whoever drew up these suggestions, recommending such a system as the present, were fiends in human shape—were heartless monsters—were, but I cannot—I really cannot—follow the hon. member; I break down altogether in the attempt. The hon. gentleman may say that those charitable motives ought only to influence us in reference to members of parliament, and that as those suggestions were not drawn up by members of parliament, it was not contrary to usage, or uncharitable, to impute motives to the authors of them. But the hon. member himself dealt rather uncharitably even towards members of parliament opposed to his views; he proceeded to make charges against me with respect to certain declarations of mine on the subject of the Poor-law; he charged me with desiring to gain support at the period of a general election by denouncing the Poor-law, and yet having in office supported that law. He made no exemption whatever, and put an erroneous construction on what I said respecting the commissioners. I gave the same support to the law when out of office that I have given since, and at the general election I said, that although I admitted that parts of the Poor-law required amendment, and that I should be willing to listen to any improvements that might be suggested for the benefit of the poor, I had not changed my opinion respecting the commissioners, and could not therefore ask my constituents to support me on the supposition that I would take a different course upon the subject of the Poor-law from which I had hitherto taken. In fact, I made precisely the same declaration to my constituents at the two last elections, and it is therefore rather hard to be accused of holding one language in office and another when out of office. And so the hon. member for Finsbury, forgetting the charitable construction which he would have others put upon his motives, said that those who had declared for repeal, if their opinions remained the same, ought to vote for repeal. But I have heard very few indeed say that they would not support the principle of the Poor-law, while they at the same time insisted on its amendment and modification. The hon. member for Nottingham said that nothing could be more ridiculous than for any man merely for the sake of consistency to vote in favour of a measure of this kind if once he was honestly convinced it had failed. I readily allow that any man who could say, that although he was convinced that this law was expensive and obnoxious in its operation, and unsound in principle, yet that through a mere regard to consistency, or party motives, or through a desire to take a more active part in public life, he would vote against the dictates of his conscience and give it his support—I readily allow that such a man must be base indeed, and that such a course would be as unwise as it would be unjust. We should come to a decision on the question in accordance

with our own conscientious convictions, and not from the influence of any clamour that might be raised against it. Nothing can be more easy than to raise a clamour against any particular law for the relief of the poor. I can conceive, with respect to persons in that condition of life which might possibly make them, under adverse circumstances, applicants for Poor-law relief, that an argument more calculated to excite their passions could not be used than that which had been used by the hon. member for Nottingham. The hon. member says that the blacks in Jamaica drive their gigs and drink their champagne. But the House must bear in mind that those blacks are now free labourers, and entitled to all the privileges of free subjects, and the mere circumstance of their colour being black makes no difference. Suppose that a portion of the blacks do drive their gigs and drink champagne—and their number I presume must be limited—still they must pay for these things, and they earn their money by the sweat of their brow. But the hon. gentleman says (and I suppose him now addressing a collection of 5,000 persons), "True it is, I cannot give you gigs to drive about in, or champagne to drink; but what a miserable law it is which prevents me giving you, not champagne, but the ancient, constitutional drink of the country—ale?"

The hon. gentleman says, the law is to be impeached, because it does not give an adequate supply of the ancient constitutional beverage of the country to the poor. Now, it seems always to be assumed that there is a large existing fund applicable to the Poor-law relief; but whence is that fund derived? From taxation. On whom does the taxation fall? Let us never forget those who are a little elevated above pauperism, and who, being fixed to their places, cannot move—the small farmer, the retail shopkeeper, and the artisan, who determine to derive no relief from the Poor-law, because they are inspired with a love of independence, which we ought to cherish. These men support their families by the sweat of their brow; and they say, "We must contribute to the relief of the poor; but give us security that the money is not misapplied—give us security that it is not appropriated to the support of idleness; and when we cannot afford ale for our own families, we cannot find ale for those who won't work." A law that gives them that security is a just law. Let the House take the whole of the circumstances into consideration, and contrast the operation of the present law with the operation of the law under which the overseers supplied the means of maintenance to the poor, and, being bakers and dealers in flour and articles of subsistence, charged, as I can show, 40 per cent. advance on the articles so supplied. I must say that the poor man, elevated above dependence, and struggling against the necessity of applying for Poor-law relief, but being bound to contribute towards the fund for the relief of the poor out of his scanty means, has a right to say, "Let the accounts be fully examined; let the money be duly and properly applied, and let no overseer or parish officer make use of this Poor-law system, not for the purpose of relieving the poor, but, as they carry the bag, for the purpose of putting their hands into the bag for their own benefit." But now it is proposed that, without substituting any other system, and without the proposition of any new law—for we are left in uncertainty as to whether or not we are to return to the old system, and as to the principles of any new system which the hon. gentleman may deem it right to recommend—we should agree to a resolution which implies that the existing law—though no particular parts of it are specified—is "not conformable with Christianity, sound policy, and the ancient constitution of this realm." I do hope that the House of Commons will be cautious how they pass a resolution specifying what is or what is not conformable with Christianity. This is a dangerous topic; and I hope that those who moot the question of the principle of the present law, or the substitution of another law, will content themselves with moving for the repeal of the law, without involving the House in a discussion on abstract questions. Above all, I trust with respect to a law which, as long as it continues in operation, ought to have the sanction and support of the legislature, that this House will not, in consequence of vague resolutions like the present, offering no practical measure, do any act calculated to raise an outcry against the existing system, and to paralyze every man whose duty it is to administer the law, thereby leaving this country in the worst of all states as regard legislative measures, namely, with one system condemned and in operation, and no practical substitute proposed.

On a division, the numbers were: Ayes, 58; Noes, 126; majority, 68.

## SUPPLY—STATE OF THE COUNTRY.

FEBRUARY 24, 1843.

On the Order of the Day being read for going into a Committee of Supply on the Navy Estimates, Mr. Hume and Mr. Williams called the attention of the House to the immense amount of the estimates for this year, and to the alarming amount of destitution existing in the country, and implored the right hon. baronet (Sir R. Peel) to apply adequate remedies before it was too late.

SIR ROBERT PEEL had listened with attention to the speeches of the hon. gentlemen opposite, and he thought, that many points which they had discussed, would have been much better deferred till the estimates were under consideration. If the hon. gentleman (Mr. Williams) had postponed his observations with respect to the civil, the superannuation, and the naval and military pension lists, until the estimates were brought specifically before the House, a much better opportunity would have been given for affording explanations on the points to which he had referred. But the House must not take it for granted, although the hon. gentleman stated, that he had bestowed much time on his calculations, and was convinced of their entire correctness, that the compliment which the hon. gentleman had paid himself was entirely deserved. The hon. gentleman said, "Look at the amount of the estimates for civil superannuations in 1818, and compare them with those of the present year; see what an increase has taken place;" but the hon. gentleman should know, that a very great proportion of that increase was caused by the reductions which had been made in the civil establishment. In 1830, the Duke of Wellington's government made considerable reductions in the civil establishment; and, subsequently, similar reductions were effected by the governments of Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne. But the hon. gentleman must be aware, that it was impossible to effect such reductions without making provision for the parties who were thereby displaced. The hon. gentleman must know, that it might be perfectly consistent with sound economy, and with practical permanent reduction, to exhibit an increase in the amount of civil superannuations. The hon. gentleman said, "I have gone through these estimates; I have compared them with the estimates of former years, and I find an enormous increase in the amount of naval pensions." That was true; but when the hon. member compared the estimates for the present year with those of a former year, he should bear in mind, that at the former period, Greenwich Hospital possessed large funds applicable to naval pensions, of which it was now deprived, and that, consequently, that House was called upon to supply the deficiency. The hon. gentleman said, "Look at the immense amount which is given to the widows and orphans of officers; I cannot conceive what is the reason of this." He begged to inform the hon. member, that the increase to which he alluded had been made in conformity with the recommendation of a parliamentary committee; and he would advise the hon. gentleman not to be too eager in future for the appointment of parliamentary committees. He would advise the hon. member to place more confidence in the executive government with regard to the effecting of retrenchment, and not to refer matters of this kind to parliamentary committees; for his (Sir R. Peel's) experience had shown him that the members of such committees, under the influence of the kindest motives—from a feeling of sympathy towards the friends and relatives of the gallant defenders of their country, were prone to say, "Let us be liberal; compare these services with civil services;" and the result was an increase in the estimates. He would tell the hon. member what had taken place, within his own experience, with regard to the pensions of the widows and orphans of officers. Formerly, the funds for providing pensions for widows and orphans were mainly supplied by the contributions of naval officers, which produced, he believed, a sum of more than £100,000. It was, however, considered unjust that naval officers should be taxed to furnish a fund for this purpose; and a parliamentary committee said:—"It is not fair to levy contributions for supplying pensions for these widows and orphans upon the officers; we, therefore, recommend parliament to abolish this system, and to undertake themselves to provide means for the payment."

That recommendation might or might not be a just one; but the circumstance showed that parliamentary committees were not always favourable to reductions in

expenditure, and it accounted for the increase in the estimates under this head, which had so much surprised the hon. gentleman. A comparison had been made between the charge in the year 1791, for naval, military, and ordnance services, with the charge for the present year; but the hon. gentleman had totally admitted the fact, that in the first case the estimate was only for Great Britain; in the present day it was the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The hon. gentleman said that the constitutional practice of the House was not to vote the supplies until the ways and means were before parliament. He apprehended that the constitutional practice had always been to vote the supplies before they voted the ways and means, and that parliament never sanctioned the principle that they should impose taxes in the first instance, without knowing what the exigencies of the public service were; but that, on the contrary, they should first determine what amount the public necessities required, and then supply the means. Neither of the hon. gentlemen had made any motion on this occasion. Of that he did not complain, though no one was less disposed to undervalue the matters to which they had called the attention of the House. The hon. gentlemen the members for Montrose and Coventry must both excuse him for saying, without meaning to express any doubt as to the importance of the matters which they had pressed upon the attention of the House, for no one could be less disposed than he was to undervalue the subject which they had spoken on that evening, that finding they had not had an opportunity in the four or five nights last week that the subject of the distress of the country was debated, of making their speeches on that question, they had taken that opportunity of delivering them. But he hoped that the effect of the hon. gentlemen's speeches would not be to raise a general discussion, and he would not follow the hon. gentlemen through the whole of their speeches, because he thought that the House would be unwilling to go fully into the subject on the present occasion; but if he were so to follow the hon. member for Montrose he thought he could prove to him that his assertion that the consumption of tea had fallen off was not correct; he thought he could prove to him also, that the consumption of tobacco had not fallen off. He thought, moreover, he could prove to him that there was no reduction in the consumption of coffee. The fact was, as the hon. gentleman would remember, that there had been a reduction of duty on coffee, and consequently a smaller amount of duty paid did not necessarily indicate a falling off in the amount of the article consumed. The hon. member for Coventry (Mr. W. Williams) also, he thought, had come to some erroneous conclusions on some important points, but the most important matter that the hon. gentleman insisted on was this, that the House ought first to ascertain what was the amount of the revenue before they proceeded to vote the estimates. It was quite true that a private individual might do something like this with advantage; it might be possible for him to find accurately the state of his yearly income, and reduce his expenditure accordingly by retrenching superfluities; but in a great country like this such a course was wholly impracticable; the amount of expenditure must necessarily depend on a variety of considerations, and the amount of revenue which might be required in any year could not always be made to depend even on considerations of the distress of the country; something must depend on the state of the relations of this country with other powers; something must depend on the likelihood of war,—something must depend on the necessity of supporting the power of maintaining ourselves on a suitable footing with regard to the force kept up by other countries; and the fact was, that if the House, acting on this principle, were to reduce the expenditure so as to admit of a reduction of revenue, they might speedily find themselves in a situation in which they would be led into increased expenditure. In the year 1822 they reduced the expenditure, but that reduction the hon. gentleman would find led to increased expense. By reducing the military force they had found it was necessary to increase the expense under that head; for it became necessary in consequence to increase the amount of military pensions, and altogether there was a greater expense. Differing, then, from the hon. gentleman on several points, with many of the principles of the hon. gentleman he fully agreed. In the present state of the country especially there was every disposition on the part of her Majesty's government to make efforts to accomplish a reduction of expenditure; but still, looking at all the circumstances of this country, and the situation in which it stood with respect to foreign powers, he said, that supposing the produce of the income-tax should show

at the end of next year a material increase of revenue, it would be unjust to calculate upon it as if permanent, intended as it was for present purposes. Under the pressure of taxation which was felt in this country that would be unjust—he said under the pressure of taxation as felt in this country, for he did not agree with the noble lord, that taxation pressed on no country so little as on this. On the contrary, he was confident that the pressure of taxation was the cause which made us unable to undertake many invaluable improvements, incapacitated us from making those sudden and prompt exertions which the exigencies of the state might require. But, however this might be, he must say, that when the House looked at the estimates of the present year, they must have reference, not to the years 1791 or 1822, but to the situation of the country at present; for they could not make reductions in the military and naval establishments with the ease some gentlemen among them did. It was perfectly true that two great wars had been brought to a happy conclusion; but it did not necessarily follow that parliament could reduce at once the naval and military establishments to what they were before those wars began, or to what they were in 1822 or 1791; they must look not merely to the desirableness of an immediate reduction of the expenditure, but at the very great distance at which those wars had been carried on. Take the case of China. It was quite true that the termination of the war with China would relieve the country from all the expense that was necessary to keep up an active state of hostilities; but although a treaty had been agreed to, the House should remember that it had not yet been ratified by the emperor of China. In carrying on hostilities with a country so remote and so powerful as that, it might not be consistent with sound policy to loosen too soon the hold we have upon China. We had concluded a peace with China upon our own terms by the exercise of great valour, great perseverance, and also he was confident by the exercise of great forbearance, convincing the public mind of China that we were not the barbarians they described in their public proclamations. He believed that the people of China were surprised by the conduct of our troops. This he inferred from the apathy of the people when they discovered we were not subject to the charge of being that barbarous race which we had been represented to be. But the House must bear in mind that the Emperor of China had objected to sign the treaty until her Majesty Queen Victoria had signed it. Her Majesty had done so, and it had been sent out to the Emperor, but it had not yet been ratified. He therefore thought there would not be much difference as to the policy they should pursue, in not evacuating the possessions they had obtained there, altogether for a reliance on the forbearance or good faith of the Emperor of China. That he conceived was a competent reason, although the war had been brought to a most successful conclusion, which it must be a satisfaction to be able to maintain with good-will and amicable feeling towards the Emperor of China, why this country should continue to keep a considerable force in the Chinese Seas. He thought the hon. gentleman would not dispute this. [Mr. Hume: I did not say a word about China, I spoke of Syria.] He was only mentioning the case of China, to show that it did not follow that, because in 1842 the war with China had been brought to a successful issue, therefore in 1843 the expenditure of the country could be reduced to what it was before that war commenced. But he thanked the hon. gentleman for having mentioned Syria, for he (Sir R. Peel) conceived it was a strong point in favour of the argument which he was then urging. The hon. member said, that last year we had on the coast of Syria, in the Mediterranean, fifty ships of war, and that we had since reduced them to forty; and the hon. gentleman asked why this was done? For some reason or other, we had such confidence in the sound sense and good feeling of the French nation generally, that we were not disposed to consider the ravings of the newspapers as the expression of the public sentiments. We knew that the French government, and the thinking portion of the nation, were desirous to remain on good terms with us. The newspapers, whatever might be their power, were not always the organs of the national will. There was a great commercial community growing up in France, which would ultimately constitute the public of that country, and would have the power of making its opinions and sentiments known and understood independently of the agency of the newspaper press. However important newspapers might be as auxiliaries in supporting and vindicating the honour of their country, yet they were not at all times to be regarded as the exponents of a nation's feelings.



But we had confidence in the good sense of the community of France, and, without disputing about whether one country or the other had forty sail or fifty sail in the Mediterranean, we were convinced, so long as the good feeling existed between the two countries, whether one or the other chose to keep up a greater or less force, they might depend upon it, it would not increase the danger. Nothing was gained by maintaining an undue amount of force without necessity, and he believed that there was that progress of sound opinion in France, that if any party could for a moment create a war, for the mere purpose of indulging a spirit of military bravado, or of unjust aggression, there would be raised throughout Europe a feeling of indignant resistance at its injustice, more formidable than had ever before been known. He was now speaking of Syria, and did not wish to introduce any party considerations: but he might say that he hoped by the end of this year, instead of ten line-of-battle ships, and fifty sail, there would only be four line-of-battle ships, and twenty-five sail of our ships altogether in the Mediterranean. That, he apprehended, would be deemed a pretty considerable reduction. He trusted, too, that the French government, attending only to the true interests of the people, would, like us, see that every expenditure on warlike preparations which were not necessary to the protection of the country was only, as it were, so much dead loss. The reductions this year upon the naval, military, and ordnance estimates were not less than £832,000; the number of men reduced in the navy would be 4,000; but the House would be aware of the necessity of keeping a strong force in China, where its presence might be still necessary. He must observe that any increase of late years had been in conformity with the wishes of the House, and it was at no period consistent with sound policy or real economy to reduce the military, and still less the naval force of the empire, below a certain standard. Not long since, there were threatening appearances, both in the United States and in Europe, which induced parliament to think that the estimates ought not to be reduced. In the army, the reduction would, he believed, be not less than 5,700 men, but he did not recollect whether that was the precise number. At all events, the estimates were considerably below that of last year. The House might depend upon it, that finance committees were not proper judges of the general necessities of a state. Those must be left to the executive government, although he admitted that finance committees might be able to give a sound opinion as to particular diminutions of expense upon isolated points. What ought to be the amount of force for the protection of the interests of the country, must, after all, remain a question for the decision of the executive government. The members of the cabinet must know far better than any finance committee the state of our relations with foreign countries, justifying an increase or a diminution of our establishments. The reduction in the ordnance department was, he believed, £257,000; and in the whole, as he had stated, the saving this year would be £832,000. The hon. member for Montrose (Mr. Hume) had admitted, that the demand in the shape of estimates was less this year than last, and in the natural candour of his mind, he would be compelled to give ministers credit for a considerable saving of the public money. The hon. member had unquestionably given a very fabulous and imaginary account of the preparation of estimates. The hon. member had asserted that they were not prepared at the Treasury, but by the different departments. Now, if the case were so, great credit was surely due to the departments for having reduced the estimates by the amount of £832,000 in their own expenditure. The tendency of departments was naturally the other way, and unless some control was exercised over that natural tendency, they found great difficulty usually in making material reductions. But the fact was, these estimates were subjected to great control. The departments had first made them out; then the Treasury, knowing what was the state of the revenue, subjected them to a severe scrutiny. He believed that that course had been pursued in former years by former treasuries, and he could assert distinctly that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had devoted the greatest attention to the consideration of the estimates. He deeply lamented the state of the revenue; he lamented its inadequacy, and must bear his testimony to the desire of every member of the government to reduce the estimates to the lowest possible amount. It was necessary to look at the state of the force in various parts of the world, and not to run any unjustifiable risk by unduly lessening our naval and military force. He thought that matters of detail on

these subjects could be better discussed when the estimates were regularly before the House, and every information would then be willingly afforded.

The House, after a short discussion, went into committee, several votes were agreed to, and the House resumed.

## COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SITTING IN THE CABINET.

FEBRUARY 27, 1843.

In reply to some remarks by Lord John Russell, in reference to the Duke of Wellington's position in the cabinet—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, he apprehended that there was no constitutional rule against the tenure of a seat in the cabinet by the Commander-in-chief. There were instances in which the Commander-in-chief had formed part of the cabinet, and of these, the case of Marshal Conway, to which the noble lord had referred, was one. It was true, that in recent times there had not been a Commander-in-chief in the cabinet. Sir David Dundas and Lord Hill were not political characters, and it was not remarkable that they, considering their occupation, should not have had a seat in the cabinet. In the case of the Duke of York, it was not probable that a prince of the blood, holding the relation that he did to the throne, should have a seat in the cabinet. As far as constitutional analogy was concerned, he did not see any reason why the Commander-in-chief, in the same way as the Master-general of the Ordnance, should not be allowed to hold a seat in the cabinet. The Duke of Wellington, whilst he was Master-general of the Ordnance, had always held a seat in the cabinet. He presided over the whole of the concerns of that department of the army, and no one thought that the tenure of that office was a reason why he should not hold a seat in the cabinet. Take, again, the instance of the Admiralty. The authority which presided over the whole of the naval service, and superintended the whole of the promotions in the navy, the first lord of the Admiralty, was not excluded from a seat in the cabinet; nor were the lords of the Admiralty disqualified from sitting in the House of Commons. Lord Hill, to the great regret of the government, had on account of growing infirmities signified a wish to retire. For some time he had retained his high office rather in accordance with the wish of the government than his own desire, but at last he had been compelled to resign. It then became the duty of the ministers to advise her Majesty as to who should fill the post. Under the circumstances, he (Sir Robert Peel) had not the slightest hesitation in recommending to her Majesty, that he who had so often led the armies of this country to victory, should now be placed at their head. Whatever even might be the general custom, be appealed to the House whether, in this particular case, the whole course of the conduct of the Duke of Wellington, when in command of the army, rendered it in the least probable that political motive would influence him? He (Sir Robert Peel) had thought that the Duke of Wellington was most eminently qualified for the office of Commander-in-chief; but such also was his sense of the high qualifications of that noble Duke for civil as well as military services, that he (Sir R. Peel) should have thought it highly disadvantageous to the country if the military services of the Duke of Wellington had been secured at the expense of his resignation of a share in civil councils. It was quite true that formerly her Majesty's ministers had entertained the opinion, that the holding of the office of first lord of the Treasury and of Commander-in-chief by the same individual was open to objection. The painful duties of both those offices were more than human strength could sustain. But it was entirely a different question whether the offices of first lord of the Treasury and Commander-in-chief could be united, and whether a peer like the Duke of Wellington, not holding office, but having a seat in the cabinet, should hold the command of the army and yet retain his seat. He (Sir R. Peel) did not know whether the Duke of Wellington retained his general opinion with regard to the union of the offices of first lord of the Treasury and Commander-in-chief, but he (Sir R. Peel) claimed for himself the whole responsibility of the late proceeding. At the same time, the unanimous opinion of the cabinet was conveyed to the Duke of Wellington, that it was desirable for the public service that he should accept the command of the army, and at the same

time retain his seat in the cabinet. The whole responsibility for that advice fell upon him (Sir R. Peel); and he believed that the Duke of Wellington had taken that course which was in unison both with the public feelings and the public interests.

The House then went into committee.

## WAR WITH AFFGHANISTAN.

MARCH 1, 1843.

Mr. Roebuck brought forward the motion of which he had given notice, for the appointment of "A Select Committee to inquire into the circumstances which led to the late hostilities in Affghanistan, and to report the evidence and their observations thereon."

SIR R. PEEL said—Sir, there are two questions—amidst some that are not immediately connected with the main point at issue—there are two more immediately connected with it, which have been brought under the consideration of the House in the course of the present discussion—the one, whether or no the expedition undertaken by the Governor-general of India was consistent with sound policy; and the other, whether it is fitting for the House of Commons to appoint a select committee for the purpose of inquiring into the policy of that expedition. These two questions I consider to be not necessarily connected with each other. I entertain, and have entertained from the first, strong doubts as to the policy of the expedition into Affghanistan. When it was first mentioned in the speech from the throne, I intimated my doubts. From the first period of the session, I said in very strong language, that I thought the adoption of Shah Soojah, without a perfect conviction that his promotion to the throne would be in conformity with the feelings and wishes of the Affghan people, would be very much like, although the scene was different—but would very much correspond with the policy of the adoption of Charles X., and the attempt to force him upon the reluctant people of France; and I said that I did not think the change of the scene, the one operation taking place in Asia, and the other in Europe, made any very material difference in the policy of the measure. With more prophetic wisdom, my noble friend, the Duke of Wellington, predicted that you would succeed in your military operations, but warned you that your difficulties would only begin when your military enterprises were successful; and therefore, Sir, it must not be implied, if I find myself unable to support the motion brought forward by the learned gentleman, that my refusal to support it is an abandonment of my former opinion as to the policy of the original course. Subsequent events have, I think, confirmed the original apprehensions that were entertained. Even if I conceded that the conduct of the Russian agents justified your suspicion, and justified the adoption of active measures against Affghanistan, still I must contend, with respect to undertaking the support of Shah Soojah, under the impression that his accession to the throne would be popular among the Affghan people, that subsequent events proved that impression upon that point to have been erroneous. Shah Soojah had no root in the affections and predilections of the people of that country. In the letters which have been published of the late Colonel Dennie, to whose gallantry I bore a willing tribute the other evening, that gallant officer said, with reference to the force with which he had been left, and which was called Shah Soojah's, "What a farce it is that it should be called Shah Soojah's, when it is entirely composed of Hindoos, and there is not a single Affghan in it!" I think, therefore, that even if I conceded, for the sake of argument, that your suspicions of Russia were well founded, I should still doubt the policy of undertaking the support of a prince who did not possess the affections of his people, and by separating your army from their resources—placing them at a distance of nearly 600 miles, where they were separated from those resources by passes over which you had no command, and where you were entirely dependent upon money to gain those who guarded the passes—and subsequent events have confirmed the doubts which were expressed from that side of the House as to the policy of the expedition. I retain the opinion I before declared, but I consider that question to be perfectly distinct from the question, whether as a member of the government, possessing the confidence of her Majesty, I should think it expedient to lead

the influence which a government naturally exercises, to appoint a select committee for the purpose of inquiring into the policy and justice of a great operation undertaken four years ago. [An hon. member, "Oh, oh!"] I should be glad to receive some more intelligible, though not more audible intimation of dissent. I do not know the grounds of the dissent, but probably the hon. gentleman will take an opportunity of explaining them. In considering the question whether I shall assent to a select committee, I shall discard every other consideration than this:—"Is it for the interest of the Crown, whose servant I am, but above all, is it for the public interest, that this inquiry should now be entered upon?" I cannot exclude, on this occasion, the consideration of what is due to the usage of parliament, and if I find that in all the contests of parties, and all the motions of this nature, we adhere to usages, and do not forego them unless under some urgent considerations of public interest, and that if we did we should excite continual dissension, what principles, I ask, should now make me depart from them? Foreign policy has on many occasions been subject to contention. When, indeed, did parties exist, without finding some part or other of the foreign policy of their opponents to condemn? In the revolutions of governments which have taken place, it never has been the usage for any government, on taking possession of office, to use all its power and its influence in this House to bring under investigation the acts of its predecessors. It never has been the custom of the House, and it would not be just now to establish such a precedent. That does not shut out considerations of public interest; but the power of the government is not to be employed against their predecessors in office on mere party considerations. I shall not be influenced, therefore, by party considerations in the vote I mean to give. I might make use of the motion for party purposes. The gentlemen opposite complain of the conduct of the present Governor-general of India, and we are threatened by a motion against him, which I might anticipate by taking advantage of the present motion. If I were influenced by party considerations, I might support the motion of the hon. and learned gentleman for a select committee, and retaliate for the attack on Lord Ellenborough, by promoting the attack on Lord Auckland. But I disclaim being influenced by any such feeling. It is not parliamentary usage for the ministers who command a considerable majority in this House, who have access to all the secrets of office; it is not customary for them to employ their political power in condemning the policy of their opponents. I do not forget what occurred in 1840. I was in opposition, when it was proposed that papers connected with the subject should be laid on the table. A motion was then announced by my right hon. friend, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and I remember that we were influenced in relinquishing that motion, because we would not express any doubt of the success of our military operations beyond the Indus. But our opinion and judgment of the policy, which we then explained, remain the same. If, however, we made no motion of censure on this policy when in opposition, can I be less reluctant now we are in power, now that we are made wiser by events, to call for the opinion of the House on the policy of our predecessors? Sir, when the thanks of this House were voted to Lords Keane and Auckland, the military and civil directors of the war, and when this House consented to vote a grant of money by way of pension to the former of those noble lords, I then, though I fully acquiesced in the public acknowledgments of the House, nevertheless hesitated in giving my sanction to the direct vote of the public money for the purposes to which it was sought to be applied. I must say, that some of those who are to-night the loudest in reprobating the principles of the war, were at that time the loudest in expressing approbation of it. I remember, Sir, that the chief opponent of my views upon one of those occasions, was no less a person than the seconder of the motion now under consideration. When I cautiously made a reserve as to the general policy of the war, and objected especially to the grant of money, the hon. member for Montrose approved of the policy, and also assented to the appropriation of the money. [Mr. Hume.—The policy was not the question.] If I were trusting to my general impression, I might doubt the correctness of my recollection; but I must bring the hon. member to book. Opening a volume of the Parliamentary Debates, the hon. member cannot surely deny that he approved of the policy. [Mr. Hume.—I don't deny it.] Oh! very well; then I have done [cries of "Read, read"]—Certainly I'll read. This is all stated, you know, in a good.

humoured way. I don't know where to find the sentences, I'm sure; but I suppose I shall find them somewhere in the climax. We usually find the strongest points in conclusion of a speech. Here is a passage, "I am of opinion that the result of the expedition will go far to strengthen the British power in India." [Mr. Hume.—Oh! read on, read on.] Very well!—I will now read a passage from the beginning of the hon. member's speech, "Having seen the lamentable results of inefficient arrangements, I think the greatest credit is due to the British authorities."

Oh! but he goes further than that: here's another passage—"I think the conduct of Lord Auckland is marked by the greatest wisdom."

Then here's another; now, what will the hon. gentleman say to this?—"I believe that it is an expedition more likely to be beneficial to India than any which has previously taken place."

[Mr. Hume. Read on.] So I have struck the hon. gentleman above and below, and in the middle, and I hope he's satisfied. But I quote this to justify myself in saying, that I have from the first, expressed my distrust of the policy of the expedition, though I am now opposed in objecting to this inquiry to those who formerly gave it great praise. Sir, if the hon. member formerly believed the expedition was so satisfactory, and now votes for the present motion, I am justified in affirming that I shall deal unfairly, and act differently from my conduct when in opposition, were I now to consent to the proposed inquiry. Nothing is more easy than to talk of the House of Commons as the great inquest of the nation—nothing is more easy than to talk of its unlimited power, to inquire into all the actions of men in office, and of its duty to investigate and punish all abuses. But where are the limits to such inquiries? Shall I inquire as to the policy of the Syrian war—as to the effect of our bombardment of St. Jean d'Acre, and as to the effect our conduct on that occasion had upon our relations with France? [Mr. Hume: You ought.] I ought—the hon. member says I ought—and having acquiesced in that inquiry, "as I ought," I shall of course have my acquiescence pleaded as a reason for granting the other committee. We shall have therefore a separate committee on the Syrian war; and I will tell you what this will end in—it will end in transferring the executive government from the Crown to the House of Commons. Because, observe—if on every point of questionable policy this House is to have a committee of inquiry—if such committee is to have the power of sending for persons, papers, and records—if it is to ransack every public office for official documents, and summon every minister of the Crown to give evidence before it, why, the practical result must be, that the executive government will be suspended. Yes, the hon. member for Montrose says, truly enough, that if I grant one committee, I ought to grant another. Of course, the having granted these committees, I may expect that another member will come down and say, that the arrangements under the American treaty are prejudicial to our interests, and that we must have a committee of inquiry on that subject. Having granted the first two committees, I could not refuse the third, and of consequence, I must hand over the executive government to the committees of the House of Commons. Am I then, as a servant of the Crown, and the guardian of the prerogatives of the Crown, rejecting all party considerations, and considering only what would be for the interest of the Crown, to assent to this motion? My opinion is, that I ought not, and on that ground I shall resist it. The hon. gentleman does not accuse any person of dishonest or corrupt motives; it is only a question of public policy of a doubtful nature. The hon. gentleman says, that the papers laid on the table do not give a fair representation of the policy pursued in regard to Afghanistan. It was said last year by a noble friend of mine in another place, that he thought the volume of papers published, did supply sufficient materials to enable us to judge of the policy in question. I agree in that opinion, though all the papers were not granted, and that the late ministers in the exercise of their discretion, which must at all times be exercised by every servant of the Crown, did make a selection of papers; I must say that I think that volume does contain a sufficient account of the motives of the individuals, on whose opinion the invasion of Afghanistan was judged to be politic and necessary. In 1840 I contended against that judgment, and that policy, as explained by subsequent events, is certainly not justified. Perhaps, more papers might be called for, and if more papers were called for, which I hold to be a more legitimate mode of proceeding—though I must say that my noble friend the Presi-

dent of the Board of Control said that there was no reason to suppose that any documents had been withheld—but if a motion were made for more papers, that would be a more proper course of proceeding than the motion now before the House. Though I might not be disposed to acquiesce in any such motion, not thinking it necessary, it certainly would cause less inconvenience to the House, and be less injurious to the public, than the committee it is now proposed to appoint. Now, what must be the course pursued in that committee? There must be an inquiry as to the conduct of Russia. The defence of the government must be the conduct of Russian agents, and that the state of relations with Russia justifies the measures of provocation then adopted, and which entitled them to consider those measures as necessary to their defence against Russia. It would then be necessary for the committee fully to investigate all the grounds of suspicion or offence, taken against Russia. But then, if you were to do full justice in this committee, I do not see how you could refuse to hear what Russia had to allege in reply. Russia might admit that she was fully justified in adopting such proceedings in Cabul, that in the state of her relations at that time, she was justified in having an agent there, as she had a just cause of complaint against you for having an agent in Circassia, that these things justified her in retaliating upon us, at the north west frontier of Asia. That justification might be made; but then, I ask, would the public interests be advanced by thus re-opening forgotten quarrels. What are our relations with Russia at the present moment? I trust we have laid the foundation for increasing our commercial intercourse with that country. We do trust that the benefits derived from this first step in the relaxation on the restrictions on commerce will induce Russia to proceed further? When these friendly relations between this country and Russia are extending, let us offer no impediment to the increase of our commercial relations with it. But what has been the conduct of Russia on the north-west frontier? Surely, if her designs had been hostile against this country, the time to have exhibited them would have been when Russia had heard of what had been the issue of our first advance on Afghanistan. When she had heard of the destruction of the garrison at Cabul, when she heard what was the position of our troops in Ghuznee and Candahar, then, if Russia had any hostile feelings against this country, that was the time for taking advantage of your disasters, and the most favourable means of doing so was by encouraging Persia to advance for your defeat. The whole course of Russia has been the reverse of this. So far from being unfriendly, she was not even passive, she was not indifferent; but, in the midst of your disasters, Russia, I must say to her honour, and as a proof of her friendship, did every thing to mitigate your misfortunes. She offered the best advice to Persia, and to every tribe in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan. In a recent instance too, where two subjects of this country were exposed to outrage—when they were treacherously murdered at Bokhara—the influence of Russia, persevering in the most friendly feelings towards us, was employed. Every species of remonstrance—every kind of inducement—was offered to save the two gentlemen from destruction. It is for the public interest to continue this friendly intercourse, and, taking it for granted that the feeling is sincere, to encourage it. Which I ask, would it be most for the public interest, to take that course, or to enter upon an investigation into the conduct of Russia on the north-west frontier in 1838, and to condemn Russia for acts which in the present state of her relations, she repudiates; but which, under different feelings, she might have felt herself justified in adopting? I do think that the prerogative of the crown would be prejudiced by a committee of inquiry, and by such an investigation as that now proposed. It is my opinion that the interests by an inquiry—in which the point of defence must mainly turn on the hostility that at the time was exhibited by Russia—the public interest could not be advanced by entering upon such an inquiry. We have here no great calamity to avenge. We have vindicated the honour of the British arms, on the scene of their former disasters. Our relation with Afghanistan—our unfriendly relations with Afghanistan—are closed. We are not called upon, as in the year 1840, to take steps for the purpose to avenge our disasters. The insult has been avenged. The credit of our arms has been re-established. I do say, then, that considering all these points, my counsel to the House—and I hope it is a counsel the House will be inclined to take—my counsel, influenced solely by what I believe to be the public advantage, my humble, my respectful counsel to

the House, is not to risk the disturbance of our present most friendly relations with Russia. I believe that those relations will be continued and maintained. My earnest advice is, that you may not do that which may prove fraught with great danger. You ought to take care too and establish no precedents which may be a check upon the future usefulness of public servants. It is of the utmost importance to obtain from public servants communications which they can make with perfect confidence. You are not to judge of their communications by events. They are bound to give what may appear conflicting arguments—the considerations for and against—the public servant is bound to state the arguments for or against a certain course of policy, and a very nice consideration can alone determine the balance. Yet what will be the consequence, if these frank statements are to be revised by a hostile committee of the House of Commons? The public servant is invited to state frankly his views to the government, and it exercises its judgment as to the publication of papers. You, for instance, call for copies or extracts of these papers. Thus you admit, that the government may have a discretion; that it may be justified in withholding some of them from your knowledge. Now, the committee appointed for the purpose of conducting what has been called a judicial investigation may not be disposed to listen in the same manner to the reasonableness of this discretion that a House of Commons does. It may consider that from a judicial committee no documents should be withheld. For all these considerations, I conclude by entreating of the House not to give its sanction to a proceeding which I have so frequently before referred to—not to permit the just prerogative of the Crown to be transferred from the executive to a committee of the House of Commons; and by so doing, to open new quarrels, and disturb relations which are of the most peaceful and tranquil character.

On the division the numbers were:—Ayes, 75; Noes, 189; majority against the motion, 114.

### CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

MARCH 8, 1843.

In the adjourned debate on Mr. Fox Maule's motion—"That this House immediately resolve itself into a committee, to take into consideration the petition of the commission of the general assembly of the church of Scotland, and the matters therein contained"—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows:—The general opinions I entertain on this most important subject have been so fully explained by my right hon. friend and my learned friend, and, I must say, by the noble lord the member for the city of London also, that it will not be necessary for me to trespass at any length on the patience of the House. At the same time, I could not permit a discussion of so much importance to close, and give a silent vote on it. In the course of the debate, warnings, in the most friendly spirit I admit, have been given her Majesty's government not to underrate the real character of the crisis which is approaching, or to credit reports that the danger apprehended is of little importance. I rise to address the House under no such impression. I believe the crisis to be most important. I believe the danger to the church and to the true interests of religion to be extremely great. I conceive nothing more unsatisfactory than the present state of the public feeling in Scotland on this subject. With respect to the effect on the church in diminishing the efficiency of that great instrument of good, and disturbing the social comforts and peace of the people no one can be more impressed with the evils of the present state of things than I am. Looking at the points admitted by the late lord advocate of Scotland, I feel that a concurrence in the present motion would have a tendency to unsettle the authorities and the constitution. If decrees are issued from the courts of law, and if these decrees are to prove of no effect, it is evident that the operation of the law becomes paralysed. This is a state of things not provided for by the law. If a church established by the law and founded upon statutes becomes at variance with the law and interrupts its operation, what must be the result? Such a state of things could never be contemplated by the law, which always recognises in itself a power to carry its decrees into effect. Sir, I feel the fullest sense

of the importance of this subject, and the magnitude of the evils which threaten from it. Nobody can feel more strongly that the cause of morality and religion has been zealously promoted by the church of Scotland. I have been personally brought into contact with it in the administration of public affairs. The right hon. gentleman said that the power with which I was entrusted was exercised satisfactorily. At the time I exercised that power, I had an opportunity of observing the worth of the ministers of that church, and the importance and value of the establishment, and the impression then made has not been effaced by any thing which has occurred in the interval. A great principle, however, is involved in the proposition before the House. The right hon. gentleman does not ask us to go into a committee for the purpose of proposing a bill for the settlement of the question. If that had been the right hon. gentleman's object, the government might, as far as they could consistently with the preservation of the rights of the Crown, respecting patronage, have been disposed to aid him. When I say consistently with the rights of the Crown respecting patronage, I mean this, that if the right hon. gentleman had proposed any measure affecting patronage which the ministers of the crown felt it their duty to object to, in my opinion we should not have been justified in giving the consent of the crown to the introduction of such a measure, merely for the purpose of enabling the right hon. gentleman to have it discussed. The Ministers of the crown, in giving the consent of the crown to the introduction of a measure, imply their approbation of its principle, and Ministers ought not to give a mere constructive consent, with the intention of afterwards opposing the measure, merely for the purpose of permitting it to be discussed. I apprehend that the right hon. gentleman's object in submitting this motion is to submit to the consideration of the House the claims of the Church of Scotland. That was the construction put upon the motion by my hon. friend the Member for Morayshire, and in that construction the right hon. gentleman entirely acquiesced. My hon. friend told the House that unless they were prepared to assent to the principle of the claims put forward by the Church of Scotland, they ought not to accede to the motion for a committee. The right hon. gentleman assented to the proposition thus advanced by my hon. friend. I tell the House that to go into a committee for the purpose of making some proposal either at variance with the claims of the Church of Scotland, or falling infinitely short of them, would be practising a delusion, and would not relieve us from any of our embarrassments. The right hon. gentleman moved for the printing of certain papers, and presented the petition from the commission of the General Assembly, and he founded his motion upon those documents. That I understood to be the case from the right hon. gentleman himself, from the late lord advocate, and from the hon. member for Renfrewshire, all of whom adopted the opinions of the Church, and declared that the motion was brought forward in conformity with them. I am not wrong in putting that construction on the motion. I am sure that the right hon. gentleman is above the paltry course which is sometimes pursued in a case of great difficulty and admitted embarrassment, of proposing to go into a committee for the purpose of consideration, in the vain hope that the committee may be able to devise some means of extricating us from the difficulties of our position. [Mr. F. Maule: Hear.] The right hon. gentleman says, that he is above having recourse to that expedient. The House of Commons, therefore, leaves the admission of the right hon. gentleman to me. He tells me, now that I am speaking—and no one, therefore, can be deceived—that he does not intend to be a party to what I have justly called a paltry course of proceeding, and will call upon the House to go into committee merely in compliment to the Church of Scotland. The question before us to-night is simply this—is the claim put forward by the Church of Scotland such a claim in principle as the House of Commons ought to recognise? It is on that ground, and on that only, that I refuse my assent to the proposal of the right hon. gentleman. I refuse my assent to the proposal of the right hon. gentleman, not because I would refuse to legislate if I saw an immediate and satisfactory solution of our difficulties. I reserve to myself the entire power of legislating on the principles that I think consistent with the constitution, and on the principles of English jurisprudence, and the right hon. gentleman must not infer, because I refuse my assent to the appointment of a committee, on the grounds proposed by him, that therefore I



mean to imply a refusal to legislate at all upon the subject. The question the House has to determine is, whether it can give its assent to the principle for which the Church of Scotland contends. I, for my part, cannot do so. I find in the papers before us two proposals made by the Church of Scotland. One is for the abolition of patronage; the other is for the definition of ecclesiastical and spiritual power and authority to be given to the Church in ecclesiastical matters; to determine the construction of statutes, and, in cases of doubt, as to whether the matter in dispute be ecclesiastical or civil; to determine, according to the expression of the right hon. mover, within its own sphere, whether it have authority to decide or not. I see that the claim, in respect to patronage, according to the explanation of the Church, rests on different grounds from the claim for authority to decide in spiritual cases. In their answer to the letter of my right hon. friend, the Secretary of the Home Department, the Church states that the abolition of patronage is not an essential condition to the continuance of the Church's connection with the State. At the same time, however, the Church urges the abolition of patronage on very strong grounds, not only of policy, but of right. It is stated to be opposed to the discipline of the Church of Scotland, as set forward in the earliest statutes; that it was abolished by the Scotch Parliament in 1649, and 1690, and was restored by the act of the British legislature in 1712, and that such restoration was opposed to, and was a breach of, the regulations of the Act of Settlement, the Act of Conformity, and the Act of Security. I wish to speak of the Church of Scotland with the greatest deference and respect; and if in examining any of the positions which the Church has taken up, I should speak with the freedom which is necessary in conducting my argument, I hope it will not be considered inconsistent with the feelings by which I declare myself to be actuated towards the Church. I must say, that if I have ever seen any prospect of a satisfactory settlement of this most difficult and embarrassing question, such a glimmering of hope has arisen out of the spirit and temper which have pervaded this discussion. I think the Church of Scotland must be convinced, that there is no disposition on the part of the House of Commons to deprive it of any privilege which is essentially necessary to its efficacy as an establishment. It must be evident that we are not influenced by temper. There has been no reference to angry expressions which may have been used in the course of this long-continued contest. There has been an oblivion of all party feeling; an abstinence from all exasperation. Whatever may be the issue of this motion, the discussion has been conducted on both sides of the House in the temper and spirit befitting the nature of the subject, and its great importance. I am sorry to be compelled to dissent altogether from the position taken by the Church of Scotland, with respect to the abolition of patronage. Respecting the abolition of patronage there is a question of right and a question of policy. First, on the question of right, the Church asserts that "patronage in the appointment of Ministers is opposed to the discipline of the Church of Scotland, as set forth in her earliest constitutional standards." Now, there is no foundation for that assertion. The statutes passed in early times for establishing the Church of Scotland did not recognise as essential to the existence of the Church the abolition of patronage. Patronage was co-existent with the Presbyterian establishment from a very early period. What says Lord Moncrieff—a man who from his hereditary connection with the Church of Scotland is entitled to the highest deference on a question of this nature? Lord Moncrieff, who was the author of the Veto Act in the General Assembly, said, "One thing is certain, that patronage has existed consistently with the constitution of the Presbytery in the Church of Scotland for the long period of which we have been speaking, and consistently with the constitution of the Church in any other respect."

That was the opinion of Lord Moncrieff with respect to patronage. I need not refer to statutes. The statute passed in 1567, which was acquiesced in by the Church, expressly recognised the preservation of patronage "in the hands of the just and ancient faith." The Church may say, that it does not attach much weight to statutes after its public declaration on that subject; but I will defer to the public declaration of the Church—a declaration made previous to the first statute of 1567. "The views of the Church," (says Lord Meadowbank,) "were fully developed in the answer of the General Assembly to a message from the Queen in the year 1565, read

by the Lord Justice-Clerk; but to which, as the foundation of the statute of 1567, I beg again to direct the attention of your lordships:—‘Our mind is not that her Majesty, or any other patron, should be deprived of their just patronages, but we mean, whensoever her Majesty, or any other patron, do present any person into a benefice, that the person presented should be tried and examined by the judgment of learned men of the Church, such as are the present superintendents, and as the presentation unto the benefice appertains unto the patrons, so the collation by law and reason belongs to the Church; and the Church should not be defrauded of the collation no more than the patrons of their presentation; for otherwise, if it be lawful to the patrons to present whom they pleased, without trial or examination, what can abide in the Church of God but mere ignorance?’”

That is the opinion of the Church in 1565 with respect to it. They state that they do not wish to interfere with the rights of patronage, but they pray for the right of examination and collation as belonging to the Church. The General Assembly next states that patronage was abolished in 1649 and in 1690. It was not abolished in 1649 or 1690, for in the one case the patronage was given to the Kirk session, and in the other instance it was conferred upon the heritors and elders of the parish. The right of a congregation to elect a minister was never admitted by the Church of Scotland, either by statute or by any recognised act of the Church. With respect to its being an infringement of the Act of Security or of the Act of Union, it is hardly necessary to discuss that point; but, if insisted upon by the Church, repeal the act of Anne, and if the claim was then made valid, they would be obliged to act upon it. I have as yet heard nobody insist in the course of this debate upon the abolition of the act of Anne as being inconsistent with the privileges of the Church. Now, with respect to the policy of abolishing the law of patronage, I cannot acquiesce in it upon that ground. Lord Moncrieff thought the actual abolition of the law of patronage would involve a serious detriment to the Church of Scotland—that learned person was decidedly opposed to its abolition, and he discussed the various authorities who might be called upon to exercise right of presentation if patronage was abolished. Lord Moncrieff took the case of the Kirk Session, and pointed out circumstances so objectionable that it would be impossible to transfer the right to them. He discussed the point as to the transfer of the right to the heritors and elders of the parish, and he after consideration thought them unable to exercise the right; and, next, he discussed the more important proposal, namely, that this right should be transferred to the people, and he urged the strongest objections against making the choice of a minister depend upon popular election. I never could assent to the proposal that the communicants, or heads of families, or any description of people should have the absolute right, by a majority, of electing the ministers of the Church. There is no analogy between the election to civil offices and the election to the performance of spiritual functions vested in a minister of the Church. It is perfectly proper, that with respect to civil rights, and where the person chosen is to be the protector and guardian of civil interests, the people should enjoy the irresponsible power of electing whom they pleased; but the analogy does not apply to the choice of a minister. The duty of a minister is to teach, to admonish, and frequently to perform unpopular functions; and to establish that relation between a minister and his flock, which would be established if you make him dependent upon the popular voice, would be to degrade the office of the minister, and to deprive him of all chance of being useful in his sacred calling. Therefore, upon the double ground of there being no denial of the right to appeal, and with the gravest doubts as to the policy of abolishing patronage and making the appointments of ministers depend upon popular election, I cannot assent to the proposition of the Church, that patronage is a grievance, and that it is the duty of parliament to remove that grievance by the repeal of the statute of Anne. To the other proposals of the Church, namely, that the Church should have the power of placing its own construction on the statutes of the realm, and that parliament should define the bounds of civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, that claim I am not disposed to grant. I hold it to be impossible to define beforehand the bounds of ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction. There is no such definite demarcation between them as makes it possible to draw the line. If it were attempted, it would dissatisfy both the Church and the civil courts. How

impossible would it be to say where the line should end—how much must be left to the varying accidents of futurity; and hence, having failed to draw the line, the same questions must arise. We all admit, that to the Church belongs the exclusive jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters. I admit it, and I admit that in all quiet times questions of dispute will not arise. They have however arisen, unfortunately arisen, in consequence of the perseverance of the Church, after the decision of the House of Lords, in supporting what is called the Veto Act of 1834, and still more by the violent and tyrannical act by which the Church deposed those ministers who, having taken the oath of allegiance, considered it to be their duty to obey the laws of the country, and proceeded with great forbearance to yield obedience to the supreme civil tribunal of the land. Upon those ministers there had been no imputation cast. They objected to Mr. Edwards, the presentee, and it was not until the House of Lords had decided that the Veto Act was an illegal assumption of authority, that these men determined to obey the law as laid down by the supreme tribunal. I have read the judgment of Lord Cottenham. There is, I believe, no imputation upon that judgment, either on account of intemperance of language or the extent of the principle adverse to the Church; and after reading that judgment, I must say, that if any authority in this country is at liberty to say, that the decisions of the House of Lords are not to be obeyed, and that the principle laid down is not to be obeyed, then there is an end to the connection between Church and State, and if it be carried to the full extent, there will be no security for the civil power itself. Having taken the oath of allegiance—having yielded obedience to the Church, then when the act of the Church is declared to be an illegal assumption of authority, these deposed ministers had yielded obedience to the law of the land, as pronounced by the highest tribunal, and thus became liable to be visited with the severest penalties—they are pronounced contumacious by the Ecclesiastical Court—they lose their station in the State—they are deprived of their civil rights, and thus, in return for their allegiance to the Crown, the Crown can give no protection to its subjects. Look at the situation in which these men so deposed by the Church have been placed. They are men educated for the ministry—their whole prospects in life depend upon their continuance in the position in which their talents and virtues have placed them. The Church court determines, that in consequence of their deference to the law they shall be deprived of the right of officiating, and other ministers are sent into their respective parishes. I believe the Church prevents them administering baptism; and, under all these circumstances, have they a right to the stipend? The civil court has the right to leave the stipend to them, the Ecclesiastical Court has the right to prescribe the duty to be performed. Under the one authority the late minister may remain in the Manse, and enjoy all those advantages, and under the other authority another minister comes in and performs all the spiritual functions; but is it clear he can maintain his right to the stipend? This is not a mere claim to the stipend; his office is one with which the most important duties are connected, and if he is not allowed to perform those duties, what, I ask again, is to become of the stipend? But that is not the only question, nor the most important. It is the degradation of character to which these men are subjected that most affects me, and for what offence is this penalty to be inflicted upon them? Merely for having yielded to the laws of their country that obedience which it was their duty to yield to them. This is not now a mere speculative position. At this very hour the Veto Act is maintained in full force, and the men who obey the decision of the House of Lords render themselves, by so doing, liable to the severest persecution. Contemplate the case of a man in such a situation, with the popular feeling running against him, and in doubt whether he ought to obey the courts of law or the General Assembly of the Church, and I do maintain, that even in the times that preceded the Reformation, the Church of Rome never laid claim to a greater power than that involved in the claims now set up. I draw a complete distinction between the Veto Act as passed by the Assembly of the Church before and after the judgment of the House of Lords. I should be the last to question it, because, in 1835, I, being then the minister, proposed a vote for church extension in Scotland, notwithstanding the passing of the Veto Act. I viewed the passing of that bill with no undue prejudice. I saw that great exertions were making by the Church to supply the spiritual wants of the people of

Scotland—the necessity was very great, and the ministers of the Church zealously applied themselves to provide increased means of spiritual instruction for the increased population of the country. I have always admired the character of the Scottish clergy; they are not merely learned men, but the extent to which they combine great theological acquirements with the most active and assiduous discharge of parochial duties—the manner in which they visit the poor, and perform all the ministrations of their sacred office, impressed me with the greatest respect for them individually, and as an establishment. I did not hesitate, therefore, in 1835, notwithstanding the passing of the Veto Act, in conjunction with the government of that day, to recommend to Parliament a grant of public money for the extension of the Church of Scotland. But the moment the House of Lords, after great deliberation, determined that the Veto Act was illegal, the question, in my opinion, assumed an entirely new character, and not only did I think that the church, by the repeal of that act, would have made a becoming concession, but I was of opinion that, by taking that step, they would enable parliament to take the measures that would be most consistent with the rights of the church and the civil liberties of the people. The opinion of the right hon. and learned gentleman, the late lord advocate, was stated fully on this subject; but I beg you to remember that when you are discussing this claim of right on the part of the church, it is not a mere speculative assertion of abstract right; but at this moment the Veto Act is in force, and the ministers who observe the law are suffering the penalties of their obedience. Therefore, I apprehend that it is the best friends of the church who must most of all lament this decision. I think there is in this House a very unanimous feeling—I must except the hon. member for Renfrewshire—but there is a very general impression that the best course the church could have adopted would have been to suffer the House of Lords to determine the question, and to defer to their decision. I cannot think that the church was justified in referring to the dicta of other churches; the question is, what was the judgment of the authorised tribunal, the sentence of the court appointed by the public to entertain and decide questions of that nature? In that judgment, I must think that there was nothing inconsistent with the rights of the church; it was merely to this effect, that the civil rights of a subject of the Crown had been prejudiced by the act, that the court had a right to take cognizance of his complaint, and that in a matter where a right was at stake, they had the power of redressing a grievance sustained by a subject of the realm. I cannot, therefore, admit the justice of the claim urged by the church, or the policy of attempting to define civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Read the earlier statutes, when Catholicism was the established religion of the State, before the Reformation. Look at the statute of Westminster, and the long series of acts passed from the reign of William the Conqueror to that of Henry VIII., and you will find these conflicts between the civil and ecclesiastical authority arising in this country. They have arisen in every country on the face of the earth; and it has been found utterly impossible for the legislative authority to define beforehand what is the line of demarcation between civil and ecclesiastical authority. The church asks permission, if I understand the matter rightly, in cases of spiritual authority, first, to put its construction on the statute, and then to determine within its own sphere whether the matter be ecclesiastical or civil. What was the expression of the right hon. gentleman opposite?—"They claim independent and exclusive jurisdiction within their own sphere."

Why, Sir, we are all ready to admit the rights of the church to this; but, if their sphere be doubtful; if the boundaries be uncertain; who shall determine the sphere—who shall ascertain those boundaries? There is no difficulty as to the purely ecclesiastical question. I will venture to say, if the civil tribunals attempted to control the church in a matter purely spiritual, there would at once be an intervention on the part of parliament to control the tribunals. There cannot be a question as to that; but a doubt arises where the boundaries are imperfectly defined. With whom, then, shall rest the decision? Can there be a doubt that it must rest with the tribunal appointed by the legislature to decide the question—the court of law? The right hon. gentleman says there may be co-ordinate jurisdictions. I think the noble lord has shown what would be the consequence of co-ordinate courts enforcing their decrees with respect to the institution of ministers. The civil court

might give the stipend, while the ecclesiastical courts refused to grant the power of administering the sacraments; and he has clearly shown that it would amount to a severance of Church and State, and end in something approaching to anarchy. Such a system could not exist. There is a complete distinction between a church that is voluntary and independent and one that is established by the State. Take the case of the Roman Catholics, or any of the Protestant Dissenters in this country, who are not connected with the State by way of establishments; their rights, so far as voluntary jurisdiction is concerned, is quite supreme, and we do not attempt to interfere with it. Those who choose to submit to it, in consequence of their connection with any such denomination, have a perfect right to do so; but if a church chooses to have the advantage of an establishment, and to hold those privileges which the law confers—that church, whether it be the Church of Rome, or the Church of England, or the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, must conform to the law. It is a perfect anomaly and absurdity that a church should have all the privileges of an establishment—I do not speak merely of the stipends, but of all the privileges which a connection with the State bestows, and yet claim an exemption from those obligations which, wherever there is an establishment—must exist on its side with reference to the supreme tribunals of the country. No doubt can exist with respect to the state of the law, in the case of a dispute arising between a church established by the law and some other party or body; it is impossible to suppose that the termination of that dispute should be transferred to any other authority than the chief tribunal of the country in which it should arise, subject to an appeal to the House of Lords. I shall say no more on this subject; I have attempted to show why I cannot acquiesce in the demands of the church, either that the spiritual and civil jurisdiction should be defined beforehand, or that in case of a conflict arising, the determination of the dispute by the construction put on the statute should rest with the church. The noble lord appealed to me; there are many reasons for refusing to assent to the proposal of the right hon. gentleman. He has a right to make this proposal; the church has a right to make an appeal and ascertain whether the House of Commons is inclined to acquiesce in its own construction of its powers. I cannot acquiesce in that construction. I consider that a great principle is involved in this discussion. If I thought peace could be maintained—if I thought that the rights of the subject could be maintained by acquiescence in the demands of the church—such is my sense of the pressing evils I see, that I should be tempted to make the experiment; but my firm belief is that these claims, if admitted on the part of the Church of Scotland, cannot be limited to their present extent, or confined to that church. Principles are involved in the question which, if relinquished by the House of Commons on the present occasion, they must be prepared to carry further. I must, therefore, refuse my assent to the motion of the right hon. gentleman. The noble lord says, he hopes I will make no declaration, on the present occasion, which shall preclude the government from attempting to make an amicable and satisfactory adjustment of this most difficult question by legislation, when a proper opportunity shall arise. I shall most certainly avoid any such declaration. I trust I have discussed the question with temper, and I shall avoid making any statement, or giving any pledge which may tie up the hands of the government, and prevent them from availing themselves of any opportunity of settling this question when the opportunity shall present itself. My firm belief is that, consistently with Presbyterianism, consistently with the ancient claims of the church, consistently with the just rights of the church, a settlement may be effected—I do not say consistently with the present claims of the church, I do not know whether the present temper and feelings of men's minds in Scotland is favourable to the attempt—but of this I am sure, that, looking at the original statutes—looking at the original claims of the church, I greatly doubt whether there is any room for doubt as to the meaning of the law; and if there should be, if a declaratory act should be required, in my opinion it might be passed by parliament, and the rights and discipline of the church may be most strictly maintained. I wish to confine myself, on the present occasion, to the discussion of the resolutions. I know there is nothing so unwise as a premature exposition of the measures of legislation which may be thought necessary. My right hon. friend has declared the principles on which the government are ready to attempt legislation on this subject. I will not be betrayed by the right

hon. gentleman into any further explanation on this subject. The noble lord has stated, that in his opinion it would not be consistent with the original claims of the church, or with sound policy, to give to the parishioners, or to any portion of the people, the right to urge merely unfounded and capricious objections to the settlement of ministers. At the same time, with regard to what power might be given to the parishioners to state the various grounds of objections which might fairly be urged concerning the unfitness of a particular minister to be settled in a particular parish, I should be acting contrary to my present intention were I to enter into the minute examination of a question of so much interest. My object is merely to declare that, by refusing to enter into this committee, I refuse on the express ground that I see no prospect of being able to acquiesce in the views of the right hon. gentleman, or the measures he might propose. But I do not, therefore, mean to imply that the government would refuse to legislate in this matter, if they observed a prospect of a satisfactory settlement. I wish most earnestly that the Veto Act and all the impediments arising out of it were removed; but at the same time I do not think it would conduce to an amicable settlement to absolutely insist upon their removal. I think it better to say, that if an opportunity should arise, her Majesty's government would avail themselves of it, for the purpose of endeavouring to effect an adjustment. I hope that no members of this House will vote for entering into this committee merely for the purpose of relieving themselves from personal responsibility. I trust they will consider the issue put by the right hon. gentleman, which issue is, whether the claims of the Church of Scotland shall be acquiesced in or not, and that he has made a motion founded on those claims. My belief is that there is abroad in this country, in Scotland, and in many other countries—and I rejoice to observe it—after a long series of religious indifference, a full conviction of the evils that have arisen from a neglect of religious duties, and that there is a spirit alive founded upon that conviction. But I earnestly hope that there will not be combined with that spirit a desire to establish a spiritual supremacy above the civil tribunals of this country, but that, on the contrary, every effort will be made to reconcile an increased religious activity, an increased attention to religious duties, with due deference to the established law of the land. But, of this, Sir, I am confident, that if the House of Commons is prepared to depart, either in Scotland or in England, from the principles upon which the Reformation was founded—principles which are essential to the maintenance of the civil liberties of this country—whether or not the claim be preferred on the part of the Church of Rome or of the Presbyterian Church—nothing but evil could arise from the establishment of an ecclesiastical domination in defiance of law; although those who advocated such a system might allege divine authority for their mission, and might close their assumption and their claim of extraordinary power with a conscientious religious zeal—a religious zeal which could not, however, be tolerated, if it went to the arrogation of a power to be relieved from civil authority—such an assumption, and such a claim, I say, could not be acceded to without the utmost ultimate danger, both to the religious liberties and civil rights of the people of this country.

Mr. Fox Maule having replied, the House divided: Ayes, 76; Noes, 211; majority, 135.

## LORD ELLENBOROUGH'S PROCLAMATION.

MARCH 9, 1843.

Mr. Vernon Smith, at the conclusion of an elaborate and powerful speech, submitted the following motion to the House:—"That this House, having regard to the high and important functions of the Governor-general of India, the mixed character of the native population, and the recent measures of the Court of Directors for discontinuing any seeming sanction to idolatry in India, is of opinion that the conduct of Lord Ellenborough, in issuing the general orders of the 16th November, 1842, and in addressing the letter of the same date to all the chiefs, princes, and people of India, respecting the restoration of the gates of a temple to Somnauth, is unwise, indecorous, and reprehensible."

**SIR ROBERT PEEL** The terms of the resolution, and the character of this debate, must have convinced the House that the insinuations indulged in by some hon. gentlemen the other night, when I opposed the motion of the hon. and learned member for Bath, that there was some compromise between the government and gentlemen on the opposite side of the House, are entirely unfounded. I should consider I had acted most basely and dishonourably if I had been a party to any such compromise. I gave my vote against that motion, because, after having had the opportunity for four years of challenging the conduct of the late government when it was a government, I thought it would be contrary to all precedent that I should bring the influence of a new government to bear upon those who no longer held office. I thought also that disclosures might take place which would not be for the public benefit, and on that ground too I opposed the motion. But I will not claim from any one member his vote on the present occasion as compensation for the assistance, if assistance it was, which I gave in opposing the motion of the hon. member for Bath. Let the present motion stand upon distinct grounds, and let hon. gentlemen at this side of the House believe that they will never find me disposed to enter into any such disgraceful compact as was insinuated. The noble lord says,—“Dispose of this motion, and then we will come forward and challenge inquiry into the general conduct and policy of Lord Ellenborough.”

I remember very well, when in Ireland many years ago, hearing of rather a strange occurrence which took place in the Court of Common Pleas in that country. During the progress of a case which occupied the attention of the court—the late Lord Norbury was on the bench—two learned counsel, differing very much from the general character of their countrymen, which is one of kindness and urbanity, continued abusing each other after a very violent fashion for a considerable time, evidently looking to and expecting the interference of the judge. “Gentlemen,” said Lord Norbury, “take care—be upon your guard; the court will not interfere!” From that moment the two combatants ceased to abuse each other. I can tell the noble lord if he do not take care, that I will not interfere—I tell him, if he complains of injustice when his friends again assail him for his conduct, I will, when he is called upon to come forward in vindication of his conduct, retire from this House, and leave him to fight the battle for himself. The noble lord may depend upon it that I will not render him any assistance more serviceable than that of his friend Shah Soojah; but that if he too peremptorily compels an inquiry, he shall not say that I, by my presence, have subjected him to any injustice, or any imputation. The noble lord entered into an elaborate vindication of Lord Auckland. If he challenges inquiry, I will tell him on what terms I require a vindication; but the noble lord made a slight slip—and slight slips sometimes unwittingly indicate the real workings of the conscience. The noble lord asserted, that if Lord Auckland did contemplate retiring from Afghanistan, that such a course on the part of the Governor-general would have been disgraceful in the extreme; and then recollecting himself, informed us that he meant not Lord Auckland, but Lord Ellenborough. The noble lord defended his Governor-general, and I am about to prove that Lord Auckland required all his defence. True, the noble lord says, that Lord Auckland did meditate a retirement; that he was about to leave India; and that he, therefore, did nothing but collect a large force for his successor. What a defence for a Governor-general! Suspend his operations for four months, in so critical a position of affairs! What, on such a question as the relief of Jellalabad, was the Governor-general to suspend all operations for four months? and all this that he might not embarrass his successor. What an imputation upon a Governor-general! But I can prove that the defence of Lord Auckland, set forth by the noble lord, is utterly unfounded. While the noble lord, in a boastful tone, repeated the question, “Who was the man who meditated the retirement from Afghanistan?” I could have told him, but I said no more, because I was afraid of compromising the British troops and British interests. I had then in my possession a letter from Lord Auckland, his own Governor-general, showing that he was the author of the retirement. On the 3rd of December, 1841, Lord Auckland writes, and compare this with the speech made by the noble lord last year, and about the close of the session, when in the same boastful tone, which he would now reprehend, he asked me, and in a taunting manner, “What man first contemplated

retreat from Afghanistan?" I will read the passages of that letter, and it will be proved that Lord Auckland intended to retire from Afghanistan, because he knew that our position was no longer tenable. The Governor-general said that it was in vain to speculate upon the issue of the contest. He did not know all our disasters, he only knew of the murder of Sir W. M'Naghten and Sir Alexander Burnes. He was not aware of the extent of the calamities by which 17,000 British subjects met an ignoble and a disgraceful death. How can the noble lord charge with disgrace any Governor-general for contemplating retreat from Afghanistan? He was then in possession of this very letter - from which I will now read a passage—which will go to show that the noble lord's defence of his Governor-general, for contemplating the retreat, in order that he might leave unfettered the hands of his successor—is without foundation. Why did Lord Auckland want to retreat from Afghanistan? On the 3rd of December, 1841, Lord Auckland says,—“These accounts exhibit a most unfavourable state of affairs at Cabul, but they do not lead us to alter the views and intentions which were stated in our yesterday's despatch.”

You will observe that the noble lord had an impression as to the state of things in Afghanistan. Lord Auckland says,—“That it would be vain to speculate upon the issue of the contest at Cabul; but in the extreme event of the military possession of that city, and the surrounding territory, having been entirely lost, it is not our intention to direct new and extensive operations for the re-establishment of our supremacy throughout Afghanistan.”

Now mark the following passage, and mind that the present Governor-general has now been taunted with cowardice, for what the late Governor-general here deems a public duty, the retirement from Afghanistan. In another passage of that letter, the late Governor-general says:—“We can scarcely contemplate in such case, that there will be any circumstances or political objects of sufficient weight to induce us to desire to retain possession of the remainder of that country, and, unless such shall be obvious as arising from the course of events, we should wish our military and political officers so to shape their proceedings as will best promote the end of retiring with the least possible discredit. Of course it will be desirable that this retirement shall be deliberate, and the result of arrangements that will leave some political influence in the country.”

Such was the state to which the policy of the noble lord had reduced us. And what, in such a state of things, was the greatest hope of the Governor-general? That he “might retire with the least possible discredit;” and, “of course, it would be desirable that this retirement should be deliberate, and the result of arrangements that will leave some political influence in the country.” But the great object of the Governor-general was the retirement, and to bring back that native army of which the gallant spirit of Nott said, that he would undertake with 1,000 sepoys to counterbalance 5,000 Afghans. This was the state to which the policy of the noble lord had reduced us. The greatest hope of the late Governor-general was to retire with the least possible discredit:—

“Quos optumus  
Fallere et effugere est triumphus.”

Lord Auckland had sent the original directions to Major-general Pollock as to the situation of the force; and then, on the 19th February, having since heard of the misfortune at the Khyber Pass, he thus writes to the secret council:—“Since we have heard of the misfortunes in the Khyber Pass, and have become convinced that with the difficulties at present opposed to us, and in the actual state of our preparations, we could not expect, at least in this year, to maintain a position in the Jellalabad districts for any effective purpose, we have made our directions in regard to withdrawal from Jellalabad clear and positive, and we shall rejoice to learn that Major-general Pollock will have anticipated these more express orders by confining his efforts to the same object.”

That letter was written within one week of the arrival of Lord Ellenborough in India—that letter shows that the relief of Jellalabad was abandoned—that letter shows that Lord Auckland did not, during the year 1842, contemplate the effectual and efficient restoration of our position in Afghanistan. I ask the House whether I have not proved that the noble lord's defence of Lord Auckland has not failed? And if Lord Auckland did not contemplate a return to Afghanistan, is it not too



much to blame Lord Ellenborough for the retirement? Lord Ellenborough, acting upon a full sense of his public duty, thought that the safety of the British arms required the abandonment of Affghanistan. The noble lord opposite denies that the whole triumph of a Governor-general's policy is to be set or ought to be set against any individual act. Have the noble lords never had to deal with a Governor-general of whose individual acts they have disapproved? Did the Earl of Durham never issue a proclamation of the policy of which noble lords opposite had reason to doubt? Did the noble lord think it fair at that time towards Lord Durham, whose general conduct he approved, to select an individual act in order to condemn and degrade the Governor-general, whose acts, upon the whole, he believed to be beneficial? No. The noble lord then held a different language—he then spoke in terms of truth and justice with respect to their own Governor-general. See how the position of a man alters his views! The noble lord said in August, 1838,—“When the time comes, I shall be prepared—not, indeed, to say that the terms or words of the ordinances passed by the Earl of Durham are altogether to be justified—but I shall be prepared to say, that looking at the conduct of the Earl of Durham as a whole—that, believing him to be animated by the deepest zeal for the welfare of his country—believing this, I shall be ready to take part with him—I shall be ready to bear my share of any responsibility which is to be incurred in these difficult circumstances.”

Then the consideration was not to be restricted to the particular act; but when acting under great difficulties, and with the greatest zeal for the welfare of the country, the general conduct was to be set off against the particular act, and the noble lord remonstrated against the injustice and iniquity of bringing disgrace upon a man for a particular act, when his general policy was approved. And the noble lord then laid down this principle—a principle applicable to all times and to all circumstances—the noble lord in the same speech observed,—“I do think that no invective—that no sophistry—that no accumulation of circumstances—that no bitterness of sarcasm, accompanied by professions of friendship, and thereby attempting to disguise, but not, in fact, disguising, the petty and personal feelings which are at the bottom of all these attacks, will in the least degree affect the noble lord against whom they have been levelled, but that he will have deserved well of his country, well of his sovereign, and well of posterity.”

Let these general principles then prevail even among those who, seeing the general tenor of Lord Ellenborough's conduct, have held him to be entitled to the respect and to the acknowledgment of public gratitude which you have given him for contributing to relieve this country from the disasters which had befallen it—let the consideration of his general conduct prevail even amongst those who question the policy of the individual act. The noble lord opposite (Lord Palmerston) says, we ought to confine ourselves to the views contained in this particular proclamation. I protest against being fettered by any such narrow restrictions. The policy of that proclamation depends upon the circumstances in which Lord Ellenborough was placed. And what were those circumstances? The moment he set foot in Madras, what intelligence met him till the day he arrived at Benares, what a succession of events took place, calculated to disturb the firmest mind, and to infuse apprehensions into the breast of the boldest man. It has been said the cry in England was, “What next?” That was a question which Lord Ellenborough had to put to himself for four or five days after his arrival. He lands at Madras on the 15th of February, presuming at the time that his predecessor had secured the admirable position so frequently spoken of in Affghanistan. He lands at Madras, after a four months' voyage, in necessary ignorance of all that had occurred in that interval of time, and to his astonishment he hears of the insurrection at Cabul. He receives tidings that Sir William M'Naghten and Sir Alexander Burnes, the envoy and representative of the British government, had been murdered; that the city was in a state of insurrection, and that doubts were entertained as to the security of the British army. What next? He arrives at Calcutta, and there hears of the orders of his predecessor to hasten the evacuation of Affghanistan, for the noble reason of inflicting as little discredit as possible upon the British power. He repairs to Benares, and there he hears the tremendous news that not only you had lost power in Affghanistan, but that you had so depressed the spirits and shaken the confidence of the native army, that General Pollock gives this melancholy account in a letter to Colonel M'Gregor:

—"It must, no doubt, appear to you and Sale most extraordinary that, with the force I have here, I do not at once move on; God knows it has been my anxious wish to do so, but I have been helpless. I came on a-head to Peshawur, to arrange for an advance, but was saluted with a report of 1,900 sick, and a bad feeling among the sepoys. I visited the hospitals, and endeavoured to encourage by talking to them; but they had no heart. I hoped that when the time came they would go. On the 1st instant the feeling on the part of the sepoys broke out, and I had the mortification of knowing that the Hindoos, of four out of five native corps, refused to advance. I immediately took measures to sift the evil, and gradually a reaction has taken place, in the belief that I will wait for reinforcements; this has caused me the utmost anxiety on your account—your situation is never out of my thoughts; but having told you what I have, you and Sale will see at once that necessity has kept me here. I have sent five expresses to hurry on the first division of the next brigade; it consists of the third dragoons, a troop of horse artillery, first light cavalry, the 33rd native infantry, and two companies of 6th native infantry, all fresh and without taint. I verily believe, if I were to attempt to move on now, without the reinforcement, that the four regiments implicated would, as far as the Hindoos are concerned, stand fast. Pray, therefore, tell me without the least reserve the latest day you can hold out. If I could, I would tell you the day when I expect the reinforcements, but I cannot. I may, however, I believe with safety, say, that they will arrive by the end of this month. The case, therefore, now stands thus—whether I am to attempt, with my present materials, to advance, and risk the appearance of disaffection or cowardice, which, in such a case, could not again be got over, or wait the arrival of a reinforcement, which will make all sure—this is the real state of the case; if I attempted now, I might risk you altogether; but if you can hold out, the reinforcements would make your relief as certain as any earthly thing can be."

And what next? On the 17th of April he hears of the failure of General England to force the Kojue Pass. On the 18th of April he hears that Ghuznee has fallen. The question which Lord Ellenborough must have put to himself was, what next? My noble friend had to contemplate the retirement from Afghanistan. He thought, taking a comprehensive view of the matter, that our permanent interests required the withdrawal. After the decisive proof that the king which we had set up had taken no root in the affections of the Afghan country, after he found that the army which we had sent to Afghanistan was separated from its supplies by a distance of 600 miles, Lord Ellenborough then thought that it was not prudent to proceed farther, that we must awaken from our dreams of visionary conquests, and that we must place the British troops within the borders of British India. That, however, was a difficult task. It is not Lord Ellenborough who was responsible for the consequences of this state of things, it is those who invaded the country who ought to bear the responsibility. If you think that the policy of the abandonment of Afghanistan was ignoble, I challenge you to the discussion. Do not bring an indirect charge; come to the discussion, whether, under the circumstances in which Lord Ellenborough was placed, it was or was not wise in him to abandon Afghanistan. If you think that it was not, bring it to the vote, and we, who cordially approve, and who have stated our approval of this proceeding, will be ready to defend it. That policy—the evacuation of Afghanistan, was liable to misconstruction in India. It had been our policy to advance, and in general never to retire; there are few instances in India in which we have advanced and then retired. England, however, was at that time engaged in a war with China. All Europe was contemplating—some with hope, all with anxiety—the result of that struggle. By the retention of Afghanistan, the world, in India and in Europe, might think that we retained our power: the abandonment required more moral courage than the occupation; but, above all, it was necessary that in British India there should be no doubt as to the policy of retirement, and that man who had the boldness to adopt it, if the policy were wise, was deserving of all credit, and ought to receive it. And what course did Lord Ellenborough take to remove any erroneous impression on the minds of the Hindoos? It was difficult to say to them that Shah Soojah was not able to retain his hold over the Afghan people when they beheld his advance to Cabul, surrounded, as they were told, by his own troops. They were not aware of the private treaty with Shah Soojah, that he was to be upheld by British arms, and.

it was necessary to disabuse the Indian mind as to the policy of the retirement. What did Lord Ellenborough do? He found that there were military trophies in the possession of the Affghans, which he thought it desirable for the sake of the public mind to bring back. The whole of his letters considered them only as military trophies. In his first letter to General Nott, he orders him to secure these as trophies of the success of the war, and in his letter to the chiefs and princes of India he does not treat them as religious relics, but as trophies of war, and as such only did he regard them. You may not consider these trophies of victory—to you the gates of Somnauth may not have the character which rendered them valuable in the eyes of the descendants of the conquered troops of Hindostan. You have different prejudices—different associations from the people of this distant country. You almost adored, while they yet existed, the tapestried walls of the House of Lords, adorned with the memorials of an attempted invasion of your country, and you treasured them as proud records of your national glory. You hang up in the temples of the God whom you worship the flags which you have taken from your enemies—trophies seized in the midst of blood and carnage, and in the moment of victory, and you have not thought them unworthy to ornament your sacred edifices. Respect, then, the prejudices of men inferior to you in civilization. Remember how much religion is interwoven in all their political institutions—in all their civil acts. You have had this close connection described to you in eloquent and forcible language by the right hon. gentleman the member for Edinburgh, and this is a subject of which he has a perfect knowledge. He says, there is not an act of the life of the Hindoo which is not connected with their religious worship. Their food, their mode of dressing their food, their dress, all the political and moral institutions of their condition, are connected with their religion; and that being so, is it possible to view trophies of this kind, taken from them 800 years since, as being unconnected with their religion, which is so interwoven with all their social and political acts? They value these relics not because the possession of them shows the superiority of their form of religious worship—not because they are proofs of the former prowess of Mussulmen as opposed to Hindoos; but because they were the records—the disgraceful records to them—of Affghan power as compared with Hindoo power; and Mussulmen and Gentoos have an equal right to be proud, not in a religious, but in a military and civil point of view, of the reacquirement of the trophies of defeat. Therefore it is that this act, which you now condemn—this taking of these spoils from Ghuznee—was adopted by Lord Ellenborough, as a means, and for the purpose, of reconciling the people of British India to the abandonment of Affghan, and giving them some consolation in their disappointment, in seeing, for the first time, the British arms retire, not dishonoured or disgraced, but on considerations of policy. That was the ground on which I apprehend that Lord Ellenborough issued that proclamation. You may find fault with the terms of it. As I have already said, if it were not sufficiently guarded to prevent the possibility of mistake on the part of the Mahometan population, I must deeply regret it, and I concur with those who think that, though the act of taking the gates of Somnauth was perfectly justifiable, the expressions which accompanied that act might have been spared. But is it not a very different thing to make this admission with respect to a man, of whose conduct, so far as his motives are concerned, I entirely approve. Is there not, I say, a difference between making an exception in an individual case, and dooming the man to disgrace by the act of this very House of Commons which not many days since agreed to a vote of thanks to the same individual? It is impossible, I think, for the hon. member for Montrose to vote for this motion. He says, that he conceives that the impression that this act can be construed into a reverence for Hindoo worship is erroneous. The resolution which is proposed, implies that it is subject to that construction. The hon. gentleman has made by far the most powerful speech in demonstration of the policy of this act that has been made to-night, and he has quoted the expressions of a native Indian, who says,—"This cannot be considered as being done in deference to our religious ceremonies, but will be felt by the natives of British India as a great compliment, removing from their minds the impression of their ancient disgrace by the Affghan power."

Why, if that is the opinion of the hon. member, and that the manly course to take is to vote at once for the recall of Lord Ellenborough, let him not attack that

policy which he supports, by giving his assent to this resolution which he has shown to be unjust. Hon. gentlemen have said, and I have no doubt that they are sincere, that they are influenced by religious feelings, by their zeal and respect for Christianity; and I am sure that I have heard expressions of this sort from some hon. members, on whose sincerity I would not throw a doubt for one moment, for I am perfectly certain that they are sincere. But this question is to be decided by great numbers—by powerful parties in this House; and depend on it that the judgment of posterity will be passed on the event of this night. They will compare the attacks of last session—they will compare the motion, preliminary as it is to the votes of money for the public service—they will remember the declaration of the right hon. gentleman the member for Edinburgh, that the greatest disaster that ever befell the British arms, was that which occurred in Afghanistan—I say they will compare these things with the result, and they will see that in the course of the year these disasters have been repaired—that those very scopyes, whom General Pollock was afraid to lead to Jellalabad, and who, he thought, could not be persuaded to advance further, have been reassured by the superior care and attention of Lord Ellenborough. I say that posterity will see these things,—they will find the unanimous vote of thanks which was come to by this House to that man, for the ability and judgment with which he prepared the resources by which this disaster was repaired; and then they will say, that never did popular assembly commit so gross an act of iniquity and injustice as that which you will commit, if, after having given that unanimous vote, you compel Lord Ellenborough to retire with disgrace from the government of British India. “He may retire,” you say, “to the councils of his sovereign.” Is that your notion of the position which a public man fills? After being disgraced by the vote of the House of Commons for misconduct in India, is he to come back and administer the affairs of India at the Board of Control, and preside at home over those matters which you say he misconducted there? Do you believe that any man of common spirit, if you pass this vote, whatever the inclination of her Majesty’s government may be—and the noble lord says the government will protect him—will do so? It is uncharitable and ungenerous. Depend upon it, if the government were inclined to protect him subject to this disgrace, his own heart and mind would tell him that there was no other course than to retire, and mourn over this injustice of a popular assembly. If you believe that religious feeling compels you to give this vote, give it. But to those who are not influenced by such considerations, I say, vaunt not of religious feelings when you are influenced by political motives. Say what you please of the conduct of Lord Ellenborough in respect to this proclamation, and about his having lowered the character of the Christian religion; ten times more fatal will be the blow which you will strike against the purity and integrity of the faith you profess, if, being insincere, you clothe your party hostility against Lord Ellenborough in the garb of piety and religion.

The motion was negatived by a majority of 85.

## PECULIAR BURTHENS ON LAND.

MARCH 14, 1848.

Mr. Ward having moved for a select committee, to inquire whether there are any peculiar burthens specially affecting the landed interest of this country, or any peculiar exemptions enjoyed by that interest, and to ascertain their nature and extent.

Mr. G. Banks moved an amendment to the effect, that the attention of the House be directed to the existence of associations, pretending to influence the deliberations of the legislature, thereby causing embarrassment to the agriculturist, injuring the commerce of the country, and being at variance with the spirit of the constitution.

Sir ROBERT PEEL wished to take the opportunity, before the debate closed, to state to the House the course which he meant to pursue, both with respect to the original motion of the hon. gentleman, and with respect to the amendment upon that motion, moved by the hon. member for Dorsetshire. He so far concurred with the hon. gentleman who had last spoken, that he thought the hon. gentleman who had made the original proposition had a fair right to expect that the House should

decide affirmatively or negatively upon that motion. It was not in his power to give his assent to the proposal of his hon. friend the member for Dorsetshire. He could not be called upon by the forms of the House to give a direct negative to that amendment. The manner in which the question would be put from the chair he apprehended would be this, whether the motion of the hon. member for Sheffield should stand part of the question. The vote which he (Sir R. Peel) would give would be, that it should stand part of the question. He should, therefore, if the majority concurred with him in opinion, indirectly negative the proposal of his hon. friend. He should negative it upon these two grounds—he thought it had no immediate connection with the motion of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Ward). He thought that the proposal of a resolution that certain associations were dangerous, was not a proper amendment to move upon a motion that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the burthens on agriculture. He thought there was no such necessary connection between the two as to make it a fitting amendment upon the original proposition. He rather thought his hon. friend must entertain an opinion not very different from his, because his hon. friend's original intention was to move it as an amendment, not upon the present motion, but upon a totally different motion, of which notice was given by the hon. member for Dumfries; but it happening that that motion would not be brought forward so early as was expected, his hon. friend transferred it to the motion now before the House. Upon the ground of its not being an appropriate amendment, he was prepared to express his dissent from it. But there was another ground on which he was also prepared to signify his dissent from this amendment. He decidedly objected to the House of Commons dealing with any acts which it might reprobate, or with any association which it might consider dangerous, by way of resolution. How could they affect the acts or the associations by any resolution they might come to? A resolution of that House constituted no part of the law of the land. There was no obligation on individuals or on associations to defer to the resolutions of the House; and if the resolutions were not deferred to, and the country be induced to disobey them, the passing of them would have a tendency to exhibit rather the imbecility of the House than its power. Although the association had not been distinctly pointed out by his hon. friend, yet there was no doubt what association his hon. friend meant; but if there were any associations in this country which transgressed the law, and which were so far dangerous that the law ought to be enforced, then it was the duty of her Majesty's government to apply to the provisions of the existing law. If it were thought that the government was remiss in performing its duty, it was competent for the House of Commons to address the Crown, praying the Crown to enforce the existing law. That was a course implying, certainly, some reflection upon the government; but it was perfectly consistent with, and perfectly open to, the House of Commons to take that course. If, on the other hand, the law were defective, the House of Commons had a perfect right to do that which was within its own province for the amending the law, namely, to introduce a bill to remove the defects of the existing law. Either of these courses was open to the House of Commons; but he objected to the course proposed of passing a resolution which would not have the power of a law, and had no binding obligation on their fellow subjects. Upon these two grounds he must dissent from the proposal of his hon. friend. To the proposition of the hon. gentleman the member for Sheffield he should also give a decided negative. He could not acquiesce in the propriety of appointing the committee which the hon. gentleman proposed. He was sorry to hear a portion of the speech which was delivered by the hon. member for Manchester. Nothing was more unfair or more ungenerous than the attack which the hon. member made upon those gentlemen connected with the landed interest, who, in the course of the last session of parliament, showed a disposition to support the proposal for relaxing the duties upon corn and other articles. They supported him in his proposal to reduce the duty on corn, and to repeal altogether prohibitions upon the importation of foreign meat and cattle; and what was the acknowledgment which the hon. member for Manchester made for this? He said to those gentlemen—by the very support you gave to those proposals, you proved that you were conscious of possessing what you had no right to possess; and yet, in the course of the same speech, the hon. gentleman said he could assure the House, on the part of the manufacturers, that they were perfectly pre-

pared to part with the protection they now enjoy. Now, if he and those hon. gentlemen whom the hon. member for Manchester so unjustly assailed, were to turn round upon the manufacturers and say,—Because you are willing to part with the protection you now have, you impliedly admit that you have been robbing the public by maintaining duties which were not for the benefit of the public, but for the benefit of yourselves, would not the hon. gentleman himself have been the first to rise and denounce so unjust an imputation upon the manufacturing interest, and have resented it as most unwarrantably making an attack upon the manufacturers of having plundered the people? If he had ever indulged in sneers at the manufacturing interests, such sneers would have come with a peculiarly bad grace from him; with a bad grace as a minister of the Crown, and with peculiarly bad grace as an individual who owed all that he possessed to that interest which he was bound to hold dear. In the course of the debate, and in repelling some argument advanced against him, he might have used terms which any one wishing to take advantage of him might have turned to some such purpose, and which might have rendered him open to the mis-construction of the hon. gentleman; but he assured the hon. gentleman that he did him gross injustice, if the hon. gentleman supposed that he was unmindful of the deep obligations he owed to the manufacturing interests; or if he had indulged for an instant in a sneer at the tall chimneys of the manufacturers to which he owed all of wealth that he possessed. He therefore protested against the construction which the hon. gentleman had put upon any expression of his. The question between the hon. gentleman and himself was not whether any information which could throw any light upon this subject should be withheld, but whether a select committee was the proper tribunal to come to a satisfactory decision. Suppose that the hon. gentleman's committee should be appointed—that he should acquiesce in it—he would claim that his own side of the House should be fairly represented upon it; and if the committee were to represent the opinions of the House, he should be entitled to claim a majority. If so, would the report of the committee be perfectly satisfactory to the hon. gentleman? [Mr. Hume: It might take evidence.] What would be the nature of the evidence? It would only consist of conflicting opinions as to whether the land bore a greater or a less share of the burdens. The facts he had no objections to give in the shape of returns. Now with respect to the amount of taxation, the landed interest was subject to public taxes, and also to local taxation; and as some contended, it was subject to a peculiar burden in the support of a church establishment. The land had to bear almost exclusively the maintenance of the church establishment in three portions of the United Kingdom, in England, Scotland, and Ireland. In this country, likewise, it had to bear a large proportion of the expense of maintaining the sacred edifices, for he apprehended that a great proportion of the church-rates fell upon land. Then, with respect to public taxes, whatever return should be called for to show the proportion of the taxes borne by the land, and which could be produced from any office, he would have no objection to give. The hon. gentleman opposite had called for a return of the amount of the taxes borne by the land in the other countries of Europe; he did not think that the returns were very satisfactory, but as far as the government could procure them they were given. The hon. gentleman was in possession of them. Then let him take the case of the legacy and probate duties. The hon. gentleman contended that the land was altogether exempt from any charge for legacy or probate duty. He denied the assumption of the hon. gentleman. He said, in the first place, that the land did bear a considerable portion of the legacy and probate duty. All the leasehold interests paid the duty. How then was the question at issue between them to be met? Not by the appointment of a committee, but by voluntarily giving all the returns that might be called for. The hon. gentleman said, that the land paid no equivalent for exemption from the legacy and probate duties. He said, that land contributed almost as much as personal estates to the exigencies of the state by the payment of the stamp duties on conveyances. There was a material difference between him and the hon. gentleman; that difficulty also needed not a committee to clear it up, it might be done by returns. A motion was made last year for subjecting land to the legacy and probate duty. He had opposed it himself; it had also been opposed by members of the late government; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the year 1840, when pressed so to subject it, had showed, first, that the land did contribute to these taxes; and,

next, that it had paid £1,600,000 during the year for stamps on deeds and conveyances of land, whilst the total amount of the legacy and probate duty during the year was little more than £1,700,000. The hon. gentleman had totally omitted this charge, which was considered by the right hon. gentleman equivalent to the probate and legacy duty. The hon. gentleman said, that stamps were used for marine insurances and other purposes unconnected with land. Let the returns make every distinction. Let the House see what amount was contributed by the land to the legacy, probate, and stamp duties; and then let them consider, in the House, and not in a select committee, whether there were any peculiar exemptions. Next, there were the local taxes. The first great charge to which the land had to contribute was the poor rates and the county rates. The hon. gentleman denied, that these were unduly charged upon land. Here, again, let him call for returns. The hon. gentleman referred to the policy of the ancient law. He referred also to that law, as showing, that when these burdens were originally placed upon land, the same statute expressly provided, that the profits upon trade should be subjected to the tax. That was the policy of the law. Recent decisions in the courts of law had so determined; but the legislature passed an act exempting the profits of trade from the poor-rate. They found it difficult without a process of inquiry—to which they did not like to submit—to ascertain the profits of trade, or the amount at which they should assess stock in trade; and they had exempted stock in trade and profits of trade; but land was tangible, the profits were easily assessed, and they had made the land contribute to make up the deficiency. Let the House have the whole case before them, and all this would be easily ascertained. If they had a committee composed of seven gentlemen on the one side, and seven on the other, their opinions would have been made up before they began; and he did not expect that any investigation they could make, or any expression of opinion, would materially weigh with the House. An inference was to be drawn—it was to be drawn from public documents, and not by such an inquiry as the hon. gentleman demanded. Then as to the charges for highways. The hon. gentleman said, that these highways were essential for communication between different properties, but highways were equally necessary for communication between towns; and if the charge for highway rates did fall in an undue proportion upon land, surely it was not unfair to consider it a peculiar burden. But this was a matter for public discussion, on which hon. members were perfectly competent to form a decision, and no one would be influenced by the report of a select committee. That opinion would be greatly influenced by facts, but those facts could be as well ascertained by returns as by a committee. Then with respect to tithes, the hon. gentleman denies that they are a burden upon land. He drew a distinction between tithes of an uncertain amount to be determined at the caprice of an individual, and tithes paid by way of commutation, and he said,—"There has been a commutation of tithes of late years, which alters the whole question, because formerly the amount of tithe was uncertain, and varying from year to year according to the quantity produced, whereas it is now comparatively fixed and certain; therefore, whatever the opinion in former times may have been, it is now clear that tithes no longer constitute a burden upon land."

He did not deny that variable tithes were a greater burden on land than a commutation; the question, however, was whether tithes paid for the maintenance of the Established Church were or not to be considered a peculiar burden on land. As he had said last year, Adam Smith and Ricardo had settled this question. Would a committee elucidate the facts, and determine whether the hon. gentleman or Adam Smith and Ricardo were right; or was it not rather a general inquiry into which every man was capable of entering for himself. Adam Smith said:—"When, instead of a certain portion of the produce of the land, or of the price of a certain portion, a certain sum of money is to be paid in full compensation for all tax or tithes, the tax becomes in this case exactly of the same nature with the land-tax of England. It neither rises nor falls with the rent of the land. It neither encourages nor discourages improvement. The tithe, in the greater part of those parishes which pay what is called a *modus in lieu* of all other tithe, is a tax of this kind."

The opinion of Mr. Ricardo, a gentleman opposed to the corn-laws, was decided upon this point, and on that of tithes being a burden on land. Notwithstanding the origin of tithes, the claims of the church to tithes, he was willing to admit, were

equal in force to the claims of the landlords to their estates; yet both Adam Smith and Ricardo were aware of this when they considered that the land in England was entitled to protection; they both said that the English land was subject to burthens to which foreign lands were not, and they both agreed that, for the burthens tending to increase the price of the production of the corn here above the price of production on the continent, the land was entitled to protection. Then the hon. gentleman laid it down that they should only consider the comparative protection of the produce of land, and the produce of manufactures in this country, and that we had no right, in dealing with the agricultural protection afforded in this country, to consider whether other countries would produce their corn free from these burthens. There again Mr. Ricardo and Adam Smith were both at issue with the hon. gentleman. Mr. Ricardo said, "a tax that falls exclusively on any commodity tends to raise the price of that commodity;" and that if it did not so raise the price, the producer would be subject to a disadvantage, for "he would no longer gain the ordinary profits of trade." [Cheers.] The noble lord cheered. No doubt Mr. Ricardo disregarded altogether the comparative expense of production between this and foreign countries, unless the greater expense arose from peculiar burthens. Mr. Ricardo said that unless the extra expense of producing here arose from special taxation, the land was not entitled to protection; and he, therefore, dissented from the report of the agricultural committee of 1821. But let them observe the practical conclusion to which Mr. Ricardo came. He thought that Mr. Ricardo did distinctly say that tithes did operate as a burthen on land, and that they had a tendency to raise the cost of producing corn; and the practical conclusion of Mr. Ricardo's writings in 1822 or 1823 was, that until corn should arrive at the price of 70s. there should be an exclusion of foreign produce; when corn arrived at that price he proposed that there should be a duty of 20s.; that the duty should then diminish annually by 1s. till it reached the fixed duty of 10s.; and that afterwards this duty of 10s. should remain permanently, as he considered 10s. was the protection to which, in consequence of the superior cost of the production of corn in this country, the producer was entitled. These were his exact words:—"If the importation price of wheat were 60s. a quarter in England, and it was 60s. a quarter on the continent, and in consequence of the burthen of tithes, wheat was raised in England to 70s. a quarter, a duty of 10s. ought also to be imposed on the importation of foreign corn."

Here Mr. Ricardo showed a decided difference of opinion from the hon. gentleman. He said that if a tax were in operation here there ought to be protection. He (Sir R. Peel) was assuming that tithes did operate as a tax. Not only did Mr. Ricardo say that if tithes did operate as a tax there should be protection, but he admitted that tithes in this country did operate as a burden upon land. [Viscount Howick: Hear.] The noble lord could not possibly deny that Mr. Ricardo called tithe a tax. He therefore said with respect to the three burthens of public taxes, of local taxes, and of tithes, that he was perfectly prepared to produce all the returns which could be required, and let the House determine whether they were or were not actually burthens on land. He never did, however, rest the claims of the land to protection on the ground exclusively of these burthens. He had contended as Mr. Ricardo had contended, that after protection had been afforded for 150 years, and after large masses of capital had been invested in land under that protection, any rash or hasty withdrawal of that protection, throwing open the produce of this country to the unlimited and uncontrolled competition of foreign countries, would not be judicious, and he had not spoken of the interests of agriculture exclusively, but the general interests of the community: he had contended that they should deal with agricultural produce as they had uniformly dealt with manufacturing interests, to make any change with great caution and great care. He never could exclude from his consideration not only the amount of capital embarked in agriculture, but that a great proportion of the population of this country was employed in it: and if they rashly disturbed those laws, although their principle might be unwise, yet after their long endurance, not only would the landed interest be injured, but the great interests of the community at large would suffer. When hon. gentlemen quoted his expression, "that a country ought to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest," and said that he laid down this as the general principle to which the law ought to conform, they ought in fairness to couple that quotation with his declaration, that in a state of society so artificial as this, and after these laws



had endured so long, although such a principle might be sound, yet they should abstain from a rash and unwise manner of applying it without due consideration. He would read to the House the very words he had used last year upon this subject, on the motion of the hon. gentleman. He had thus contended last year:—"I rested the claims of the land to protection, not upon its peculiar burthens alone, but upon other grounds. I said, that protection to the produce of the soil had been afforded for the last 150 years—that large capital had been invested on land under that system of protection—and that nothing, therefore, in my opinion, could be more unwise than to risk the disturbance of the interests embarked in agriculture by the sudden withdrawal of the protection which had so long been afforded to them, under which the existing relations of society had in a great degree been formed, and in reliance upon which so much wealth had been directed to the cultivation of the soil."

That was the language which he held last year, and when hon. gentlemen quoted his statement of the principle which ought in the main to guide their legislation, they ought in fairness to refer to the qualification with which he had announced the application of that principle. He confessed he was rather surprised that the hon. gentleman should have made this motion. Did he think, that this inquiry ought to be completed before there was fresh legislation on the corn-laws? If he had acceded to the appointment of this committee, and had, in addition to the seven gentlemen selected by this hon. gentleman, named seven on his own side of the House, to consider the peculiar burthens on the land—and if their labours should continue for the same period as similar inquiries had done—did the hon. gentleman intend to postpone all legislation till those labours should be concluded? The hon. gentleman had referred to the possibility of the inquiry lasting two or three years, and he had known inquiries last that time. Now, did not the hon. gentleman, if he got this committee, still intend to go next week for a total repeal of these laws? Would he not say, "Although you have appointed a committee, its inquiries are all beside the question; for even if you show that there are peculiar burthens on land, the hon. member for Manchester says, and I agree with him, that there ought to be no protection on that account." [Mr. Gibson: You should equalise the burthens.] The hon. gentleman said, that they ought to equalise the burthens, and not to grant protection. If this motion were carried, might not the hon. member vote after Easter for a total repeal, leaving the agriculturists to trust for protection to the equalisation of the public burthens. He had been charged with producing uncertainty by his proposition, and the hon. member for Dumfries had given notice of a motion on that account. Perhaps he would not persevere in the motion. At any rate, he was happy to see that the hon. member thought it of so little importance, that he need not pay particular attention to the debate. [Laughter, Mr. Ewart being asleep.] He was sure that the hon. member would not be indulging in repose, if he did not know that the great question of the Corn-laws must be decided by the House of Commons, and that the proposal of a committee might be a very proper subject for debate, but that it need not occupy much vigilant attention. The hon. member thought his attendance necessary for the purpose of his vote, but that attention to the arguments was not absolutely required. On Thursday next, however, the hon. member meant to move:—"That, it having been acknowledged on the part of the ministry of this country, that the present Corn-law is not a settlement of the question, and there being reasonable grounds for believing that the existence of such law will be of short duration, it is just and expedient that a state of uncertainty, embarrassing and unfair to the agriculturists, and injurious to commerce, should be put an end to, and measures of a settled and final character, adopted without further delay."

The hon. member said, that this uncertainty was unfair to the agriculturists and injurious to the interests of commerce, and he, therefore, called upon the House to settle the question of the Corn-laws on a principle of finality; but what sort of a settlement could there be if the House of Commons referred this inquiry to a committee whose labours should not be concluded? He advised the House to act on the suggestion of the hon. gentleman's motion. The question was too vast and comprehensive to be disposed of by a committee. If the law were to be altered, let them go at once to the consideration of the alteration; let a motion be made,

An opportunity would be afforded him of discussing the policy of the present law on the motion of the hon. member for Wolverhampton (Mr. C. P. Villiers), and he would not then enter upon it. He would examine the operation of that bill, and when he should be called on, he would enter upon the various and comprehensive considerations involved in the question of the Corn-laws. He admitted, that it was of the utmost importance that the people of this country should know what were the intentions of the legislature with respect to these laws, and his belief was, that the appointment of a committee would more than any thing else contribute to create uncertainty; it would be infinitely better if the House of Commons were prepared to make a change, to make that change at once, rather than devolve an inquiry upon a committee, which, if it meant any thing, meant that they ought not to legislate till the result of their labours was known. It was not fair to give a committee, when, if it were granted, they might next week proceed at once to the repeal of the Corn-laws. The right hon. baronet concluded by saying:—"I have no other object than to do justice between all parties whose permanent and comprehensive interests are intimately united, although I know that there may be an immediate conflict between them. In the proposal which we made last year, and which was made without reference to any party or political consideration, I did attempt what I deemed most consistent with justice, and most conformable to the interests of the country. It was impossible to touch those great questions without great embarrassment. We could not remove the protection afforded to cattle and meat, and reduce the duty on foreign corn, without disturbing the minds of the agricultural body. There has been an undue panic affecting them, not warranted by the change in the law, which had created a great evil, disturbing the application of capital, and suspending or diminishing employment. A continuance of doubt will be pregnant with evil consequences. I know that it is impossible for any minister of the Crown—I know it is impossible for the House of Commons to give any sort of guarantee for the permanency of a law of this description. I have already, for myself, refused to give such a guarantee. I say that I will reserve my opinion as to the necessity for an alteration of the law; and I say that no false sense of consistency, if I am convinced that this law is injurious, shall prevent me from advising against its further continuance. But although there must be a certain degree of uncertainty as to laws of this nature, whether we take a graduated or a sliding scale, do not increase the difficulty by sending it for the consideration of a select committee, to publish contradictory evidence day by day; not elucidating, but rather tending to conceal the facts. The agricultural body have a fair right to expect from me at least a maintenance of the law, till I am convinced that it is wholly objectionable. [Viscount Howick: Hear.] If the noble lord thinks that I am making any reserve for party purposes, he is decidedly mistaken. On the one hand, I have seen nothing in the operations of the law to change my opinion as to the result; but, on the other hand, I never will give a guarantee that if, after an experience of the working of the law a better can be substituted, I will not adopt it. Although I am the author of that law I would so act, whatever may be the consequence, and even if I were to lose power to-morrow. But I will maintain the law till my opinion undergoes a change; and it would not be fitting for me, after passing this law, in which I received the assistance of a great majority of the agricultural interests, acting, of course, for the public interests, but on the implied condition entered into, that so long as my opinions as to its working shall not be changed, there should be no alteration, to disturb the minds of the agricultural interests, by agreeing to the appointment of this committee.

The amendment was negatived without a division. The House then divided on the original motion; Ayes, 133; Noes, 232; majority 99.

## TREATY OF WASHINGTON.

MARCH 21, 1843.

In the debate on Viscount Palmerston's motion, "For copies or extracts of the communications which have taken place between the British government and Lord Ashburton, their plenipotentiary at Washington, on the subject of the treaty signed at Washington on the 9th of August last"—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, the noble lord (Palmerston) has occupied nearly three hours [a voice, "more"]—the noble lord has occupied more than three hours in stating to the House his reason for asserting that her Majesty's government have acted unwisely and improperly in the selection they made of a representative of the British Crown to negotiate on behalf of this country, in bringing to a satisfactory settlement disputes which had lasted more than a quarter of a century. The noble lord has attempted to show, that those negotiations have been ill-conducted, that the terms agreed to were unfavourable to Great Britain. The noble lord denounced the treaties; he denounced the parties to those treaties; and yet the House cannot have forgotten that the powerful party, of which the noble lord is one of the heads, attempted for years to bring that question to a satisfactory issue, and attempted to do so in vain; yet now, the noble lord does not think it inconsistent with his public duty to make the motion which is at present before you, and to deliver the speech which you have just heard. The noble lord tells you, that I told the hon. member for Montrose, that I did not propose to lay those papers before the House. What was the exact state of the case? When the hon. member put that question to me, I did state that I conceived it would be prejudicial to the public service to lay before the House the whole of the correspondence between Mr. Webster and Lord Ashburton; but when the noble lord thought proper to give notice of a motion upon this subject, I said I would give all the materials which might be necessary for bringing that motion with the fullest effect before the House, and accordingly I laid upon the table every paper and document necessary for the purpose of making out any case which the noble lord might think necessary, in order that there should be no technical objection or difficulty whatever; but it must now be obvious to the House that the noble lord has evaded the opportunity thus afforded to him in a manner most unworthy of the position which he occupies. The noble lord well knows that I afforded him every facility, if he so thought fit, to move a vote of censure upon us and upon the representative whom we selected. He well knew, that if he felt himself warranted in moving against us a condemnation of the treaty, and of the negotiations which preceded that treaty, he might have done so without encountering any technical or official difficulty; but, if he had done so, I should have met such a motion by an amendment distinctly approving of the course which we have taken from the outset, and confirming the conclusion to which we have conducted the whole proceeding; and the noble lord knows that that amendment would have been carried by a very large majority of this House. The noble lord says, he has sufficient materials to enable him to judge of the principles of that treaty—he has sufficient to enable him to pronounce that the negotiations have been most unwisely and improperly conducted—that the terms of the treaty are insufficient and inequitable; and holding his position, and with these opinions, the noble lord thinks it a manly and becoming course to call for papers which I have already intimated that I do not think it consistent with the public interest to produce. The noble lord says, that the treaty is now ratified, and on that ground he would not now propose a vote of condemnation. That was not the ground taken when Lord Sidmouth concluded the treaty of Amiens. That treaty had been ratified, when Mr. Windham and Lord Grenville, who thought it unwise and unjust, did not shrink from the manly course of calling on the House to express an opinion upon it. In 1783, when the peace of Versailles was made, it was made, and after it was beyond the control of parliament, the treaty having been ratified and the ratifications exchanged, Lord John Cavendish did not shrink from calling upon the House to declare its opinion upon the treaty. He moved a resolution distinctly implying that the treaty ought to be adhered to, but censuring those by whom it had been concluded. The result was, the affirmation of the treaty, and the exclusion from power of those by whom the treaty was ratified. The noble lord has no pretext, therefore, for avoiding a resolution condemnatory of the treaty, on the ground of its being ratified, because it would be quite consistent for the noble lord to move the affirmation of the treaty, and to provide for its ratification, and at the same time condemn those under whose auspices it has been concluded. I will now take notice of the principal topics to which the noble lord has adverted, and I think it will be more convenient not exactly to follow the order of the noble lord's observations, but to separate those which refer to questions connected with slavery from those which are connected with the much more important question,

in my opinion—the question of more pressing interest—that relating to the boundary. The noble lord says, that her Majesty's government have taken what he must call a backward step with respect to slavery. He offers three proofs of that disposition on the part of her Majesty's government to retrocession. The first is with the two articles of the present treaty, which relate to the suppression of the slave-trade, by the United States. The noble lord says, that by having inserted those two articles in the treaty, we appear to admit that the United States will, by acceding to those articles, fulfil all the obligations imposed on them by the treaty of Ghent. This is the article of the treaty of Ghent, with respect to the slave-trade:—"Whereas the traffic in slaves is irreconcilable with the principles of humanity and justice, and whereas both his Majesty and the United States are desirous of continuing their efforts to promote its entire abolition, it is hereby agreed that both the contracting parties shall use their best endeavours to accomplish so desirable an object."

I ask, what has the noble lord done for the purpose of inducing the United States to fulfil the obligation of that treaty? The noble lord was ten years Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and since the year 1814 the articles of the treaty of Ghent have been in force. Has the noble lord prevailed on America to submit to the right of search? Has the noble lord prevailed on the United States to take any step so effectual for the suppression of the slave-trade as the step which they have now consented to take on the coast of Africa? For the first time, in the year 1842, the American government has consented to conjoin its efforts with those of Great Britain, on the coast of Africa, for the purpose of suppressing the slave-trade. They have agreed to appoint a sufficient and adequate squadron for the purpose of preventing vessels bearing the American flag from being concerned in the slave-trade. What right has the noble lord to assume that that is understood as a complete fulfilment of the treaty of Ghent? And what step, I repeat, was the noble lord enabled to take, during the ten years he was in power, more effectual than that to which the American government has now consented? By the 9th article of the treaty they promise to do that which they promised in the treaty of Ghent—namely, to join with us in addressing all becoming representations and remonstrances to any and all the powers within whose dominions a slave market is allowed to exist; and in urging upon all such powers the propriety and duty of closing such markets at once and for ever. So far from the present government having taken a retrograde step with respect to slavery, I say that, by prevailing upon the American government to appoint a squadron to co-operate with this country, they have taken a step more effectual, and more in advance, than the late government of the noble lord was enabled to take. The second proof which the noble lord adduces of our retrocession is totally unconnected with the present discussion—namely, the course pursued by France in refusing to ratify the late treaty. The noble lord admits, that France was willing to sign with him a treaty extending the right of search, but says that, in consequence of the treaty of the 15th of July, 1840, France refused to sign it. He said, that the French government anticipated sentiments more favourable to France from the present Cabinet, and that they deferred ratifying the treaty out of compliment to us. So far as the wishes of the government were concerned, that showed no retrograde step. But the French government did ultimately, in consequence of the intervention of the Chamber of Deputies, the popular assembly representing the opinions of the French people, hesitate to fulfil their original intentions, and decline to ratify the treaty. It was not General Cass who was the cause of that refusal. The cause was the noble lord, whose policy towards France almost brought England to a state of direct and open hostility with that country. It was the noble lord who embittered and exasperated the public feeling of France towards England, by the prosecution of his schemes in Syria, and who may claim the exclusive credit of having caused the rejection of that treaty. What course would the noble lord have us pursue? The noble lord was aware of the non-ratification in the course of last session. Why did the noble lord make no motion on the subject, and hardly put a question in the course of last session? Because he was aware, that all would have felt it to be an unseemly thing in him, who had been the cause of this interruption in the progress of humanity, to stand up and charge her Majesty's government with the blame of having prevented an extension of the right of search, and a cordial union

with France. The third of the noble lord's proofs of the alleged indisposition on the part of the present government to exert itself for the suppression of slavery, was the instructions given by my noble friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to her Majesty's vessels on the coast of Africa, to conform to the law of nations in their efforts for the suppression of slavery and the slave-trade. If I recollect rightly, the noble lord opposite was called upon to make compensation for exceeding the law, in consequence of the destruction of barracons. It is right that this country should exert itself to the utmost for the suppression of slavery; but its exertions ought to be limited by some regard for the law of nations. You may depend upon it, that if you attempt to exercise your power with a disregard of the obligations of the law of nations, you will be called upon for compensation for any acts unwarranted by that law. My noble friend acted in conformity with the opinion of him who advises the government with respect to the law of nations. My noble friend quoted the opinion of the Queen's advocate, that blockading rivers, landing and destroying buildings, carrying off persons, held in slavery, from a country with which Great Britain was not at war, could not be justified by the law of nations or the provisions of any existing treaty—that, however desirable it might be to put an end to the slave-trade, the good, however eminent, ought not to be obtained otherwise than by legal means. That opinion warranted my noble friend, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in saying that it was desirable that her Majesty's naval officers employed in suppressing the slave-trade ought to abstain from destroying slave-factories and carrying off persons, unless from territories with respect to which England was authorised by treaty to act in that manner. I am perfectly certain, that if you transgress the law of nations, your efforts, however well intended, will be less effectual than if you respect the rights of other countries. This is all I contend for. I say, employ all your naval power, and let no consideration of expense prevent you from enforcing the rights of humanity, but do not disregard, if your intervention is to be ultimately effectual, if you wish to conciliate the good opinion of other countries and induce them to co-operate with you, do not disregard the great principles of public law to which all nations are alike subject. The next point to which I shall refer, is the article of the late treaty providing for the mutual surrender of persons charged with offences. The noble lord admits, that the general object aimed at by the article is a wise one, that where the countries have a common boundary, the escape of criminals, by stepping over that boundary, is prejudicial to the cause of good order, and injurious to the interests of both countries. The reciprocal delivery of heinous criminals is clearly an object of importance to civilised governments. But I admit to the noble lord, that we must take great care, lest, in the application of that principle, we interfere with the rights of those who become freemen by stepping upon our soil. But the object must be secured by law. The article of the treaty cannot take effect without an act of parliament, and, as a bill upon the subject will be introduced, it will be better to postpone the consideration of details until that bill comes under discussion. I may observe that there is a special provision in the eleventh article of the treaty, that, if experience should show that the two objects cannot be reconciled—the surrender of criminals, and the due protection of those who, being slaves in one country, become free by passing into the other; then the tenth article is to cease to operate, and is to continue in force until one or other of the parties shall signify its wish to terminate it, and no longer. That is a wise and prudent provision, by which, if any injustice arise from the operation of the treaty, it may be remedied. The next point to which the noble lord referred was the correspondence in the case of the Creole. The noble lord must observe that no stipulations have been entered into by Lord Ashburton on that subject. Lord Ashburton expressed a wish to reserve, for the consideration of the government at home, the arrangement which it might be desirable to make with respect to cases similar to that of the Creole; but he declined to enter into stipulations on the subject. He said, that, for reasons which he stated, he thought it better that the question should be settled in London, where the chances would be much increased of a settlement likely to satisfy the United States. But on discussing the question of the Creole, Lord Ashburton laid down clearly and unequivocally this great principle. He says:—"Upon the great general principles affecting this case, we do not differ; you admit, that if

slaves, the property of American citizens, escape into British territories, it is not expected that they will be restored, and you may be well assured that there is no wish on our part that they should reach our shores, or that British possessions should be used as decoys for the violators of the laws of a friendly neighbour. When these slaves do reach us, by whatever means, there is no alternative. The present state of British law is in this respect too well known to require repetition, nor need I remind you that it is exactly the same with the laws of every part of the United States, where a state of slavery is not recognised; and that the slave put on shore at Nassau would be dealt with exactly as would a foreign slave landed under any circumstances whatever at Boston."

Lord Ashburton, then, on referring to the peculiar position of the southern coast of the United States, contended that the municipal law of each country should be put in force. That law, of course, gives the privileges of freedom to the man who has become free by touching the British soil. Lord Ashburton declared finally that he was not empowered to enter into engagements or stipulations on the principle involved in the case of the Creole. As to the compensation demanded from us in that case, the British government has refused to grant any. They maintain the principle that the slave coming upon British soil is free, without regard to any claim for compensation by the master of such slave. The noble lord afterwards observed that every point of difference had not been adjusted. If every point of difference has not been adjusted, I apprehend one reason is, that Lord Ashburton did not enter into every possible point of eventual difference, lest he might excite fears and prejudices which would prevent a satisfactory settlement of the one question which has been the festering sore in our relations with the United States for the last twenty-five years. That is the one question which has exasperated every other, and embittered every prejudice against England. When we succeeded to the government the country was trembling upon the verge between peace and war. It was difficult to say to what side the balance would incline, and Lord Ashburton's great object was to effect, not merely an adjustment, but an honourable and satisfactory adjustment of that one great question, being satisfied that a settlement of that would lead to a good understanding upon all others. The question of the Oregon territory, no doubt, is not adjusted, but on that it is not necessary that I should address the House at any length. With respect to the course which the American government has taken, the noble lord makes no allowance for the position of a government so open to popular influence as that of America. We, however, deal with the executive government and not with the senate. We have proposed to that government to consider the means of effecting a conciliatory adjustment respecting the Oregon territory; and we have met with no repulse, but have received assurances, in reply to our proposition, that the executive government of the United States is anxious to come to an adjustment of that question; and we have every reason to hope, that unless we revive the former animosity and embitter the feelings between the two countries, that our attempt to settle that question by negotiation will be satisfactory. The noble lord says that the senate has passed a bill, which I believe it has not passed. I think the votes were equally divided; but whatever the senate may do, it is impossible for the executive government to approve of such a bill after having expressed a desire to negotiate. The noble lord says, the adoption of that bill would be a case of war. I will not discuss hypothetical cases of war, when, as I have said, the executive government has signified to us its desire to maintain peace, and to effect a satisfactory adjustment of the question of the Oregon territory. I trust in the assurances of the executive government, and I will not believe that it will give its consent to a legislative measure at variance with those assurances. I have reserved for the last that most important part of the negotiation which relates to the determination of the boundary between her Majesty's north-eastern provinces in north America and the United States. We have felt it our duty to attempt to draw a conventional line for the purpose of settling that question. We have felt it our duty to pursue a different course from that which the noble lord had pursued, with but little success. Instead of new exploring surveys, and new arbitrations, we have sought and obtained an adjustment of this much litigated question, which was fast endangering the relations of amity between the two countries. Sixty years have now passed since the seeds of these dissensions

were sown. In the year 1783 England made a treaty with the United States, in utter ignorance of the geographical position of the country. From 1783 until 1841 not only had no progress been made in solving the difficulties arising from that treaty, but the question was placed, after that lapse of time, in a worse position than ever. An attempt to settle it by the treaty of Ghent was made, and that failed. Proposals have been repeatedly made since, both by the United States and the British government, for the purpose of effecting a settlement. Negotiations were tried in 1827, and the aid of an arbitrator called in; an impartial sovereign was selected for the purpose of determining, or attempting to determine what was the boundary contemplated by the parties who made the treaty of 1783. The subject was under deliberation for two or three years, and at length the king of Holland made an award, in which he stated that it was utterly impossible that that treaty could be strictly executed. The substance of his award was, that from the vagueness of the language of the treaty, it was impossible to decide in favour of either party, without violating the principles of law with regard to the other. He therefore strongly advised a compromise, and suggested that a conventional line should be drawn, dividing the territory equitably between the two countries. The American government had the award under consideration in 1832. The British government, on receiving it, professed their readiness to accept the award. When the noble lord made a notification to that effect, he declared he thought the claim of Great Britain perfectly well-founded, that the parties to the treaty of 1783 intended to give Great Britain what she claimed, but he was so anxious for a satisfactory termination of the difference that he waived the extreme right of Great Britain, and would accept the award of the king of the Netherlands. In 1832 the Senate of the United States determined not to accept the award. They said the arbitrator had no right to accept a compromise—that he was bound to decide in favour of one or the other. On that ground they refused to be bound by the award. Did the noble lord refuse to be bound by it also? No; for three years after that decision the noble lord kept pressing upon the United States the acceptance of the boundary line suggested by the king of Holland. The moment the United States refused to accept it, the noble lord was freed from any obligation he might feel to accept the award. But for three years he pressed it upon America. He wished the United States to take that very crest of hills which overlooks the St. Lawrence, for giving up which the noble lord complains of us. During that period he had opportunities of taking military advice, of ascertaining whether the country would be endangered by the proposed boundary. On this point the noble lord had no excuse. He might have been ignorant of the geographical situation of certain mountains, but at any time between 1832 to 1835 he had the means of ascertaining whether, by advancing the American boundary to the crest of hills overlooking the St. Lawrence, he would be endangering the military security of Canada or not. Canada and Quebec had been threatened by insurgents, a war was apprehended with the United States, and public attention had been called to the subject. It was well and generally known, that the proposed boundary was unfavourable to us; yet for three years the noble lord continued to press upon the American government the adoption of a line which he now says by having been adopted, exposes to the utmost danger our Canadian possessions. Well, then, in 1835, all his efforts to persuade the American government to adopt the award having proved ineffectual, in October, 1835, the noble lord gave notice that he declined to be bound any longer by the award, and since that period he has tried all in his power to settle the question by negotiation. But let me ask with what success? I will trace briefly the progress of the negotiation, and what had been done till my noble friend, Lord Ashburton, took the matter in hand. The noble lord says my noble friend is a simple-minded man, and is not skilled in the arts of diplomacy. Now, my noble friend may not be intimately acquainted with the technicalities of the Foreign Office—he may want the skill to write long protocols; but what did you do in the ten years you were in power?—what was the position in which you left the question? I submit you have had enough of the cunning of diplomacy in former years. You had a choice of diplomatists. You had men of the first eminence in all the trickery and artifices of diplomacy, and what was your success? In what position did you leave the negotiations in 1841, after having had all these skilled and practised diplomatists at your command, Sir Charles Vaughan included, and Lord Heytesbury,

whom you would not allow to govern India, but whom you think so admirably fitted, and I agree with you, for diplomatic functions—you had all these and your master-mind directing them—and I will now show, tracing the negotiations, in what position you left this question, a position scarcely less admirable than that in which you left affairs in Afghanistan. Well, in 1835, the Secretary of State for foreign affairs in the United States, foreseeing the hopelessness of negotiating, made a proposition to the English government; which proposition you left for months without notice. It might have been most proper that you should not accept the offer of Mr. Livingstone—it might be most proper that you should reject it; but why did you not answer it? Why, with war almost trembling in the balance, did you contemptuously make no answer to the proposition made to you? Why leave the American government for months—nay, for more than half a year, in ignorance of your intentions? Well, then, in 1837 and 1838, you again entered into communication with the United States. That government proposed, or suggested the appointment of an exploratory commission. You consented to adopt the suggestion, but in doing so you told them, that you anticipated no benefit as the result of it. Well, in 1838 you renewed your communications with the United States, and you pressed upon her government the policy, not of appointing an exploratory commission, but of agreeing to a conventional line. You then thought the only true policy to be pursued was to enter into a compromise, and agree to draw a conventional line of frontier between the two countries. On the 10th of January, 1838, your minister, Mr. Fox, in writing to Mr. Forsyth, says: "Both governments have agreed to consider the award of the King of the Netherlands as binding upon neither party, and the two governments, therefore, are as free in this respect as they were before the reference to that sovereign was made. The British government, despairing of the possibility of drawing a line that shall be in literal conformity with the words of the treaty of 1783, has suggested that a conventional line should be substituted for the line described in the treaty, and has proposed, that, in accordance with the principles of equity, and in pursuance of the general practice of mankind in similar cases, the object of difference should be equally divided between the two differing parties, each of whom is alike convinced of the justice of his claim."

This is the view taken of the question by the noble lord and his minister in 1838. But he went further. In the same document Mr. Fox says: "Her Majesty's government exceedingly regret that such an obstacle should exist to prevent that settlement (the division of the disputed territory), which, under all the circumstances of the case, appears to be the simplest, the readiest, the most satisfactory, and the most just."

No language of mine could be half so strong in favour of the treaty concluded by my noble friend; but the language of Mr. Fox was even yet more strong, for in a subsequent paragraph he says: "But the very existence of such conflicting pretensions seems to point out the expediency of a compromise; and what compromise can be more fair than that which would give to each party one-half of the subject-matter in dispute."

These are strong opinions to come from the noble lord who made the statement which the House has just heard. Can any one for a moment doubt that in 1838 the noble lord was in favour of a conventional line? The American government had however suggested the appointment of an exploring commission, but the noble lord told them that such a commission never could lead to any useful result, and therefore he objected to it; but so anxious was he to conciliate, that he would not withhold his consent to its appointment, if the principle upon which it was to act could be agreed upon. But what did the noble lord do—what did he effect from 1838 up to September, 1841, when he quitted office? The noble lord attempted to come to an agreement upon the principle, and I will show you the result. He began by telling the American government that he despaired of success, and when the American government asked the question, "How is the inquiry of the commission to lead to a practical result?" the noble lord answered with a species of sneer in which he much indulged on some occasions, that inasmuch as the proposal for its appointment originated with them, they were the proper persons to answer the questions; he could not do it because her Majesty's government had already expressed an opinion that it could lead to no useful result. Mr. Fox, in the letter to Mr. Forsyth to which I before referred, says: "Her Majesty's government have themselves already



stated, that they have little expectation that such a commission could lead to any useful result, and they would on that account be disposed to object to it, and if her Majesty's government were now to agree to appoint such a commission it would be only in compliance with the desire so strongly expressed by the government of the United States, and in spite of doubts which her Majesty's government still continue to entertain of the efficacy of the measure." [Lord Palmerston—Read the whole.] I have no objection, for I do not wish to misquote the noble lord. He proceeds as follows: "But with respect to the way in which the report of the commission might be expected to lead to an ultimate settlement of the question, her Majesty's government in the first place conceived that it was meant by the government of the United States, that if the commission should discover highlands answering to the description of the treaty, a connecting line drawn from those highlands to the head of the St. Croix should be deemed to be a portion of the boundary line between the two countries. But her Majesty's government would further beg to refer Mr. Forsyth to the notes of Mr. Maclean of the 5th of June, 1833, and of the 11th and 28th of March, 1834, on this subject; in which it will be seen that the government of the United States appears to have contemplated as one of the possible results of the proposed commission of exploration, that such additional information might possibly be obtained respecting the features of the country, in the district to which the treaty relates, as might remove all doubt as to the impracticability of laying down a boundary in strict accordance with the letter of the treaty. And if the investigation of the proposed commission should show that there is no reasonable prospect of finding a line strictly conformable with the description contained in the treaty of 1783, the constitutional difficulties which now prevent the United States from agreeing to a conventional line may possibly be removed, and the way may thus be prepared for the satisfactory settlement of the difference by an equitable division of the disputed territory. But if the two governments should agree to the appointment of such a commission, it would be necessary that their agreement should first be recorded in a convention, and, it would obviously be indispensable that the state of Maine should be an assenting party to the arrangement."

Well, the commission to the appointment of which the noble lord gave his consent in 1838, was to lead to an equitable division of the disputed territory; we have come to that settlement without any of the expense or delay of a commission; and I will ask the House whether, under the circumstances in which we were placed last year, we did not act a wise and prudent part? Now, I wish the House to bear in mind what it is I am labouring to prove. I want to show that when we came into power in 1841, it was most desirable that we should attempt to effect a conciliatory arrangement with America, at once, and without the loss of time and the expense of an exploratory commission. What I want to prove is, that the line agreed to and settled by my noble friend is one perfectly consistent with the honour of the country, and one which only a few short years ago the noble lord was himself anxious to adopt, and I think I have already gone far to prove that our course was a wise one, and that by adopting a conventional line we took the course the noble lord himself was anxious to pursue in 1838. It appears that the principle of a commission was agreed upon by the two governments in 1838. On the 6th of April, 1838, the noble lord sent out the draft of a convention for the new commission. The noble lord thought that the principles he laid down in that draft could not be departed from. On the 29th of July, 1839, it was found, however, that Mr. Forsyth, so far from accepting and adopting the draught of the convention so sent him by the noble lord, sent Mr. Fox his draught of the American counter-project—another project for a commission, and then the noble lord found that there was a wide difference between himself and the government at Washington—that there was, in fact, no agreement between them. On the 3rd of July, 1840, the noble lord, writing to Mr. Fox, says: "The British government accordingly transmitted in April of last year, for the consideration of the president, the draught of a convention to regulate the proceedings of the proposed commission. The preamble of that draught recited textually the agreement which had been come to, by means of notes which had been exchanged between the two governments; and the articles of the draught were framed, as her Majesty's government considered, in strict conformity with that agreement. But the government of the United States did not think proper to assent to the conven-

tion so proposed. That government did not, indeed, allege that the proposed convention was at variance with the result of the previous correspondence between the two governments; but it thought that convention would establish a joint commission of mere exploration and survey; and the president was of opinion that the step next to be taken by the two governments ought to bear upon its face stipulations which must necessarily lead to a final settlement under some form or other, and within a reasonable time. The United States' government accordingly sent to you, for transmission to her Majesty's government, a counter-draught of convention, varying considerably, as Mr. Forsyth admitted, in some parts, from the draught as proposed by her Majesty's government. But Mr. Forsyth added, that the United States' government did not deem it necessary to comment upon the alterations so made, as the text of the counter-draught would be found sufficiently perspicuous."

Now this was the state of matters in 1840. We had then Lord Palmerston complaining of nothing effectual having been done; but then, they had got the British project and the American counter-project. There was this difference, however, between them—the one contained the proposition for appointing an arbitrator, and the other did not. It was the American project that proposed an arbitrator. Then the noble lord wrote to Mr. Fox that he rejected the project of the American government altogether. Well, on the 30th of June, 1840, the noble lord sent Mr. Fox another draught of the convention, which was transmitted by him to Mr. Forsyth on the 28th of July, and how was it received? Why, on the 13th of August, also in 1840, Mr. Forsyth sent our minister another counter-project—a second counter-project, even as the noble lord had done, nor had they come to any better understanding down to August 1841, when the time was approaching for the change in the government. On the 24th August, 1841, only a few days before the noble lord left office, he wrote to Mr. Fox as follows: "Her Majesty's government received with very great regret the second American counter-draft of a convention for determining the boundary between the United States and the British North American provinces, which you transmitted to me last autumn, in your despatch of the 15th of August, 1840, because that counter-draft contained so many inadmissible propositions, that it plainly showed that her Majesty's government could entertain no hope of concluding any arrangement on this subject with the government of Mr. Van Buren, and that there was no use in taking any further steps in the negotiation till the new president should come into power. Her Majesty's government had certainly persuaded themselves that the draught which, in pursuance of your instructions, you presented to Mr. Forsyth on the 28th of July, 1840, was so fair in its provisions, and so well calculated to bring the differences between the two governments about the boundary to a just and satisfactory conclusion, that it would have been at once accepted by the government of the United States, or that if the American government had proposed to make any alterations in it, those alterations would have related merely to matters of detail, and would not have borne upon any essential points of the arrangement; and her Majesty's government were the more confirmed in this hope, because almost all the main principles of the arrangement which that draught was intended to carry into execution had, as her Majesty's government conceived, been either suggested by, or agreed to, by the United States' government itself."

This was in August, 1841, and I may be allowed to remark that the noble lord, in objecting to the propositions of the American government, had used terms, which, if ever expressions exhibited dissent to a proposition that diplomatist disapproved of, most successfully expressed dissent in all its varieties. After a negotiation of four years, the noble lord said of the arrangements proposed by the government of the United States, that as to the preamble, her Majesty's government "cannot possibly agree;" to the second article, "her Majesty's government cannot consent;" to the third article, "her Majesty's government must object." The seventh article, it was said, imposes duties upon the commissioners "incompatible with each other." I am quoting the very words used by the noble lord, and to every article there was an objection stated in a different form till they came to the tenth, and of that the noble lord said,—“But of all the propositions made by the American government, none can be more inadmissible than that contained in article 10.”

Thus to one article the noble lord cannot agree—to a second he cannot assent—to a third he said it proposed incompatible duties—and the fourth was more objec-

tionable than the preceding; for that article, he said, suggested that Mitchell's map should be used as evidence bearing upon the question, whereas every one knew that it was full of gross inaccuracies, and "her Majesty's government can never agree to this proposal, nor to any modification of it." Thus they had begun this discussion in 1783, and in 1841 we find the noble lord, with all his diplomatic skill, and all his knowledge, and all his astuteness, and aided as he might have been by Sir C. Vaughan and Lord Heytesbury, still with no prospect of peace before him; but on the contrary, almost two days before he quitted office, declaring that he could not agree, that he dissented, that he entirely dissented, and that he positively declined to assent to propositions made to him; that these propositions were founded upon principles utterly to be repudiated; that the first was inadmissible, the second bad, and the third worse; and finally, that the noble lord, on behalf of the British government, abandoned every hope of settling the question, as long as Mr. Van Buren was in the president's chair. It was in this state that the noble lord left these negotiations. But then the noble lord had said that he would make proposals of his own for settling the dispute. And what does the House think were the noble lord's proposals in that desperate state of circumstances? The proposal of the noble lord, after fifty-eight years of controversy, submitted by him to the American government for the purpose of a speedy settlement, was, that commissioners should be nominated on both sides; that they should attempt to make a settlement of this long disputed question; and then, if that failed, that the King of Prussia, the King of Sardinia, and the King of Saxony, were to be called in, not to act as umpires, but they were each to be requested to name a scientific man, and that these three members of a scientific commission should proceed to arbitrate. Was there ever a proposition like this suggested for the arrangement of a question on which two countries had differed for fifty-eight years? And this, too, was proposed after the failure of the arbitration on the part of the King of Holland, and when they had their commission of exploration in vain. And yet, with all this, there were to be three scientific men, foreign professors—one from Prussia, one from Sardinia, and one from Saxony! to do what? and where were they to meet, or how were they to come to a satisfactory adjustment? What must the people of the State of Maine have thought of this proposition when they read that they were to be visited by three professors from Saxony, Sardinia, and Prussia? But what said the noble lord's own minister on hearing of this proposition? Mr. Fox, in writing to the noble lord said, "For God's sake, if you have arbitrators, do not have professional men." That was on record. "Have," he said, "if you like, three sovereigns, but no philosophers." It was true that their judgment should be guided by scientific men; but the final judgment should be with statesmen and not with mere professors, and this, for many obvious reasons, was a point of very great importance. So also said Mr. Featherstonhaugh whom the noble lord had praised, and praised justly. But then, the noble lord relied solely upon Mr. Featherstonhaugh and Colonel Mudge. The noble lord would not depart one inch from Featherstonhaugh and Mudge. Ten years had elapsed before the noble lord would agree to settle the question, and then he would not move from the conclusions to which he had arrived through the means of those two gentlemen. The instant Mr. Webster came into office, the noble lord attacked him with Featherstonhaugh and Mudge. He called upon Mr. Webster to submit. "But no," said Mr. Webster, "I have got a Featherstonhaugh and Mudge of my own, and I am as well satisfied with these as you are with yours." The noble lord wanted to force conviction on the United States; but they would not be convinced. But what said Mr. Featherstonhaugh to the noble lord's proposition? That it was quite true a commission might be appointed; but the commissioners might not give in their report until the expiration of eight or ten years, and then the expense of the commission might exceed the value of the territory in dispute, and, after all, the decision might be against them. For God's sake, said Mr. Fox, the noble lord's minister, do not appoint professors; go on, said the noble lord's favourite commissioner, with a commission if you will, but it may exceed the value of the territory, and after all, the decision may be against you. However, there was a change in the American government, and then Mr. Fox in despair set about executing the instructions of the noble lord. The noble lord said:—"Let us consider the American *contre projet* as unreasonable, undeserving of answer—as withdrawn from consideration, and now

submit my original *projet* to Mr. Webster, the new Secretary of State, and persuade him it is reasonable."

Mr. Fox accordingly waited on Mr. Webster, and thus describes the reception his proposals met with from that gentleman, "I found him entirely ignorant of the last previous movements of the two governments on the subject." Mr. Webster not having watched the progress of these *projets and contre-projets*, says, "Give me time to master this difficult question." I know what that is: I have been trying to wade through it ever since it began in 1783, and I ask the sympathy of any one who has been subjected to a similar infliction. At last Mr. Fox reports, from communications with Mr. Webster, his conviction of a willingness to conclude the dispute by the compromise of a conventional line of boundary. That was the conclusion which Mr. Webster, a wise and sagacious man, came to before he had waded through one-half of the controversy; and as we came to the same conclusion, we resolved, instead of appointing commissioners, trusting to the evidence Mr. Fox adduced of a readiness on the part of the United States' government to act in a spirit of conciliation, we resolved to make one effort to conclude the long-pending dispute by a conventional line mutually satisfactory. And was it not time for us to do so? There are questions which admit of delay; there are speculative points of difference which may be hung up for years without compromising national interests or injuriously affecting the settlement of them; but there are others in respect to which delay brings with it certain peril. And what was the power of the arguments in this case against further delay? Have you read the correspondence of your own colonial officers as to what passed on the frontier? I hope to hear from a late high commissioner, the gallant officer near me, his testimony as to what was the result of the delay respecting the disputed territory. [Sir H. Douglas: "Hear."] Did we gain by this procrastination? No. America was nearer at hand. Every month that passed was undermining our dominion over that continent. I ask my gallant and hon. friend, for instance, whether in 1828 he did not apprehend an American subject and bring him to trial for encroachments on this disputed territory, and whether on the very spot on which he was taken, a fort has not since been erected, by the authorities of Maine? [Sir H. Douglas: "Hear."] The vast tide of population—that rapid and resistless tide which knows no ebb—presses on from day to day, and each month that passed saw our territory further encroached on—the dominion we had in 1838, we retained not in 1840; and had we postponed the settlement for another five years, the question would have settled itself by a contest for actual possession. If we had pursued then the course for the future which had been pursued in the past, let me tell you, that however boastful your language might have been, you would have placed yourself in an infinitely worse position than when you previously attempted to settle the question. Now let me refer to some of our colonial authorities to prove that it would not have been wise in us (notwithstanding our Featherstonhaugh and Mudge) to have waited, relying on commissions, for some five years longer, with no reasonable prospect of a satisfactory settlement. In April 1840, Sir J. Harvey writes thus to Mr. Fox:—"A sudden and entirely unexpected interruption has been made by a large body of the people of Maine (under the authority of certain resolutions of the legislature of the State) into a part of the territory in dispute, which has hitherto been in the possession of Great Britain."

Sir J. Harvey had the good fortune to meet with an excellent and judicious officer with whom he came to an agreement, by the exercise of mutual forbearance and discretion. But what was that agreement:—"That Great Britain should hold a part of the disputed territory, Maine denying the right of such possession, and that Maine should hold another portion of the territory, Great Britain denying the right of such occupation."

Here then was the convention. What is the account of the hostile preparations of Maine afforded by our minister, Mr. Sherwood?—"Every thing wears in Maine a warlike appearance; the people are hot for it. The draughting of the militia has commenced. There can be no doubt of the intention of the State; it is, to take possession of the territory we claim."

And was the agreement entered into with Sir John Harvey adhered to by the State? What said Sir John Harvey to Mr. Fox? "Upon the ratification of an agreement to this effect, accompanied as it was by an assurance from General Scott,

(which to me was entirely conclusive), of his conviction that it would be fulfilled by Maine 'cheerfully and in good faith,' I immediately ordered back to Canada her Majesty's 11th regiment, which was then in the occupation of both banks of the St. John river, just below the confluence of it with the Madawaska, and I shortly afterwards despatched the warden of the disputed territory with a suitable posse, with instructions to seize and destroy all timber illegally cut, and effectually to prevent, by the force of the laws of this province, all further depredations upon the timber of that portion of the disputed territory comprised in the valley of the Upper St. John. Scarcely, however, had these orders been given, and these movements made, in the very spirit, as I declare to your excellency, of an anxious desire on my part, to give effect to what I considered to be the true intent of the arrangement, when I learned, with equal astonishment and concern, that a portion of the armed posse of Maine had not only advanced from the valley of the Restook to that of the Upper St. John, and had established and commenced fortifying itself (why do this, if not conscious of the infringement of the agreement which it was committing?) at the mouth of the Fish River; but that the person in charge of this party (of the name of Nye), had actually threatened to arrest the British warden (whose posse was unarmed), in the execution of the duties which I had assigned to him."

These are the evidences of the impropriety of delay. What further is the advice of Lord Sydenham? On the 21st of May, 1841 (one of the last letters the noble lord could have written), he thus wrote to Sir. W. Colebrooke:—"I entertain the most decided opinion that the Americans ought never to have been permitted by Sir John Harvey to form that establishment, which was in direct and open violation of the convention made by himself; but it has been suffered, and thus the curious anomaly is presented of an armed posse, in the pay and under the authority of a Foreign State, being stationed in a district over which her Majesty claims, and has exercised jurisdiction. Whilst, therefore, it is true that the authority of the warden extends, even according to the interpretation above referred to, over the fort at Fish River, it would, in my opinion, be extremely imprudent and unwise to call it in question, unless we are prepared to carry it to its full extent, which would really be the removal of the American posse altogether. A case might arise of so grave a character, in the shape of insult or injury to her Majesty's subjects along the St. John's, as would necessitate interference with this force, and justify the collision that must attend it, but every endeavour should be used to avoid it, and certainly the offence contemplated as likely to call for it, is one of the last which would be a sufficient motive for what might be attended with such serious consequences."

That is the account Lord Sydenham gave of the state of affairs; you cannot repel his authority. Yet what more humiliating position could the interests of this country be placed in? We are obliged to march men to drive a foreign force out of our territory. What a situation of relations with the United States! We know the state of things in 1841 was such that twenty-two battalions were in Canada, and if we had not settled the question, those battalions would have remained there. Lord Sydenham, moreover, said,—“From my despatch of the 21st ult., your excellency will have learned my views, in regard to the exercise by the warden of any authority over that part of the disputed territory now in possession of the state of Maine.—I still continue to think that every exertion should be made not inconsistent with the national honour and the safety of her Majesty's subjects, to prevent a collision; but it is impossible to allow the people of Maine to carry out the schemes which you suppose to be in contemplation, without an entire sacrifice of British interests. I trust that the further information which Mr. McLaughlin is seeking, will show that some mistake exists as to their intentions, if not, I shall immediately upon receiving your letter and further report, apply to Mr. Fox, with a request that he will at once appeal to the federal government, to prevent acts on the part of Maine which are contrary to the existing arrangements between the countries, and which, if persisted in, must inevitably lead to collision.”

Sir W. Colebrooke wrote to the same effect to the noble lord. He said—"The encroachments that have taken place, and the embarrassments that they have occasioned, induce me to consider that no time should be lost for effecting such a settlement as may be now practicable, and not a compromise of the settlers' rights on either side of the St. John's. Circumstances might, at one time, have induced the

Americans to assent to such a line, if any were attainable, preferable to that proposed : but the settlements on the south of the river, would lead the people of Maine to oppose it, and such opposition would effectually prevent the United States from assenting to it."

Have I not, then, by strict proof, shown that in 1841, the matter admitted of no delay?—that the public peace on the frontier was compromised—that our amicable relations with the United States were endangered—that it would have been unwise to enter upon a new commission which might have lasted for years, and must have led either to our loss of the territory by constant encroachment, or to the necessity for a resort to arms for its protection? We determined, then, to make every effort for an honourable adjustment, and to invite, with that view, the assistance of a nobleman we believed best calculated, by his character, to attract the confidence of both countries. The noble lord opposite says, there were some prejudices and interests as to the United States, which precluded Lord Ashburton from being the proper person for such a commission. Sir, I never heard of such prejudices. I never heard of such imputations. Nor do I believe that there could be any considerations to which Lord Ashburton would listen, except that of his country's real welfare. And, I will add, that it was through his own wish alone, that he became not a cabinet councillor of her Majesty. He filled office with me in 1835. There is no man in the whole range of public characters, whom I consider more calculated to give strength to a government than Lord Ashburton. But ambition was not his object: he sought only an honourable retirement; cheered by the satisfactory recollection of many years' creditable discharge of public duties. Through his own act alone he was not included in the cabinet. It was at the earnest request of the administration that he, disregarding private wishes and inclinations, and believing his influence might be beneficial for the preservation of peace, undertook his important mission; and, in my opinion, he deserves well of his country—not only for having undertaken it, but for the manner in which he performed it. His conduct merits approbation, and I claim for the government all the responsibility which belongs to an entire approval of it. We think him entitled to every acknowledgment; it is the government, therefore, not Lord Ashburton, that is to be condemned on account of the treaty, if condemnation be considered just. But I conceive that instead of condemnation, Lord Ashburton and the government ought to meet with public acknowledgment and gratitude. He went out to the United States to effect a settlement. I think I have shown that it would have been unwise to attempt further explorations and inquiries by commissions. In some quarters, it appears that the American minister, Mr. Webster, has met with censure on account of the treaty, similar to that which has assailed Lord Ashburton; but I believe he was equally animated by a spirit of sincere regard for the interests of his country, uninfluenced by political considerations. If, then, a conventional line were to be adopted, what basis were we to take for the negotiation? We hoped for a more favourable line than the King of Holland had assigned us. What impression does the noble lord entertain as to the likelihood of the people of the United States agreeing to a line more favourable for us? For my part, I am convinced they were honestly persuaded of the justice of their claims, from the highest to the lowest. Lord Ashburton found, on his arrival in America, one almost unanimous *bonâ fide* conscientious feeling, that their claims were founded on justice. You may say it was an erroneous and unfounded impression; and you may be just as satisfied of the justice of our claim. But can you ever effect any adjustment without some degree of mutual concession? And the impression of the Americans had been strengthened by the noble lord's conduct. The noble lord did not insist on our extreme rights. He had listened to compromise; subsequently to 1835 he professed a readiness to divide the territory. The impression of those in America most favourable for a settlement was, that we might possibly allow an acquiescence in the award of the King of Holland ("the Dutchman's line"), but nothing beyond it: and if Lord Ashburton had attempted to take any other basis than this, he might as well have altogether abandoned the attempt at arrangement. As to advancing the boundary of the United States to certain heights in the neighbourhood of the St. Lawrence, we acted not hastily; we were most desirous that every boundary line should duly protect the interests of our North American provinces—which we were determined

to defend with the whole power of the British Empire, so long as they manifested a sincere and honest desire to maintain the connection. We did, therefore (feeling it of the highest moment not to compromise their security), before entering into any communication with Lord Ashburton, consult many of the highest military authorities; among them, the gallant officer (Sir H. Douglas), whose ability and experience entitle his opinion to much respect, Sir James Kempt, Lord Seaton, Sir George Murray, and, I may add, the Duke of Wellington. We consulted all these distinguished officers as to the most desirable line of boundary in a military point of view. Our great object was to select, in preference to that part of the boundary awarded by the King of Holland, some boundary that should better countervail any possibility of dispute. And I apprehend that we succeeded. We have got more favourable terms by Lord Ashburton's boundary, so far as military security is concerned, than those which were given by the boundary of the King of Holland. We did deem it a great object to prevent the Americans from having the command of those heights which overlooked the St. Lawrence: but the King of Holland had given those heights to the United States; and I beg to tell the noble lord, who is the foremost to condemn this proposal, that the acquiescence in that alteration of boundary has been met by great objections in the United States, and that there are some in the United States who consider that very great sacrifices have been made by that government in giving up that part of the boundary which was awarded to the United States by the King of Holland. Now, how stands the extent of territory? The noble lord said in his despatch, that the division of territory by the King of Holland was in these proportions, three-fifths to the United States, and two-fifths only to Great Britain. The boundary of Lord Ashburton gives us a much larger extent of territory—that gives, I think, about seven-twelfths to the United States, and five-twelfths to Great Britain. Mr. Featherstonhaugh calculates the difference in point of acres, and makes it also very favourable to Great Britain; I do not exactly bear in mind what the proportions were, according to him, but I think that by the award of the King of Holland we had about 2,600,000 acres, and the Americans 4,500,000 acres, and that by the present division of territory we have about 3,400,000 acres, and the Americans about 3,700,000. So that if you take the extent of territory, the division made by Lord Ashburton is a little more in point of acres than that awarded by the King of Holland; and if you take the military frontier, the boundary of Lord Ashburton is more favourable than that of the King of Holland. The noble lord referred to certain dinners which took place at Boston and New York, and at which Lord Ashburton had been present; and says, that the conclusion of this treaty was a matter of the utmost congratulation and triumph to the United States. Why, Sir, there are senators in the United States who take exactly the same view of this adjustment, as bearing upon the interests of the United States, as the noble lord takes of it in its bearing upon our interests. It is curious to contrast the language of the noble lord with that of persons of great eminence and consideration in the United States, and I cannot give a more convincing proof of the difficulty which attended this question than by showing the discordant views of different persons with respect to it. A very eminent man in the United States, a man of great weight and influence in the senate—Mr. Benton, who voted against the treaty—in speaking of the concessions made by Mr. Webster—now, just contrast this with the language of the noble lord—Mr. Benton says,—“Such are the grants and concessions from Great Britain to the United States; few in number, small in value, nothing for her to yield, injurious to her to retain, and already ours as effectually without the treaty as with it. Except the restricted and compensated navigation of the lower St. John, all the rest was already ours—ours by the treaty of 1783, and by the fact that Great Britain wanted none of these slips, or islands, or points of land, with the encumbrance of their republican inhabitants, which she makes a merit of yielding to us. Not so with our grants to her. They are large and valuable—material for her to receive—dangerous and injurious for us to yield—and involving, not only territory, but natural boundaries; and admitting a foreign power within the limits which nature herself and the treaty of 1783 had prescribed for the frontier of an independent nation. And here I frankly accost the subject, and say, that if our negotiator, in forming a general treaty for all the states, and in settling all the subjects in dispute between the two countries, had yielded to the British

Crown all that the award of the King of the Netherlands granted, I should have said not a word. But in transcending that award, which he himself opposed as yielding too much—in giving up more now than the British government demanded at the time of that award—in doing this, I find reasons for amazement and disapprobation. I am astonished at what I behold, and shall proceed to state the number and the magnitude of the sacrifices we have made, and demand from the friends of the negotiator the causes and the reasons for such extraordinary concessions."

That is the language of Mr. Benton; he thinks the honour of the United States is absolutely sacrificed by the treaty that was made with Lord Ashburton. Then, speaking of the arrangement that was made about the *Caroline* and Mr. M'Leod, in enabling the court of general authority of the United States to overrule the jurisdiction, with respect to a man committed by the States' court, Mr. Benton says:—"The infamous act—the habeas corpus against the States—squeamishly called the 'remedial justice act'—is now on the statute book, the original polluting our code of law, the copy lying at the footstool of the British Queen. And this is the point we have reached. In the short space of a year and a half the national character has been run down, from the pinnacle of honour to the abyss of disgrace. I limit myself now to the affair of M'Leod and the *Caroline* alone; and say that, in this business, exclusive of their disgraces, the national character has been brought to the lowest point of contempt. It required the Walpole administration, twenty-five long years of cowardly submission to France and Spain, to complete the degradation of Great Britain; our present rulers have completed the same work for their own country in the short space of eighteen months. And this is the state of our America—that America which Jackson and Van Buren left so proud!—that America which, with 3,000,000 of people, fought and worsted the British empire—with 7,000,000 fought it and worsted it again—and now, with 18,000,000, truckles to the British Queen, and invents all sorts of propitiatory apologies for her, when the most ample atonement is due to itself?"

These are the opinions of the Palmerston of America; and permit these extreme councillors to prevail, and you will soon have war between the two countries. But in this I confide—I confide in what I believe to be the vast preponderance of the influence of men in either country wishing and hoping for peace between them—I believe that the vast majority in America are actuated by a sincere desire for peace, and that they concur in the terms settled by Lord Ashburton. I believe that they are not prepared to act on the principles of the noble lord, on the one hand, or of Mr. Benton upon the other. The noble lord asks by implication, by the motion which he has made, the noble lord asks the House to condemn Lord Ashburton, and to disapprove of his treaty. I entreat all those, whatever their party connection may be—whatever their political opinions may be, providing that they do believe that delay in this matter was no longer possible—that delay was injurious to Britain, not merely by the want of a definite treaty, but by the danger in which uncertainty placed the maintenance of peace—I entreat all those not to follow the noble lord in his critical examination of minute details, but to take comprehensive views of the question, and declare by their language, by their speeches, by their votes, their satisfaction that the differences, with respect to this boundary, are adjusted on honourable and mutually conciliatory terms. Depend upon it no adjustment will be to our advantage which is not based upon conciliatory terms. If you have three professors to reinforce Messrs. Mudge and Featherstonhaugh, and if you force a boundary upon a reluctant people, you may be abstractedly in the right; but your prospect of continued peace would be lowering and gloomy, if a sullen assent were to be given on the part of the United States. I say, therefore, that a measure of adjustment was not the only object, it was necessary that that measure should be a satisfactory and conciliatory measure of adjustment. Why, we are not now minutely to criticise the treaty. Let us think how our North American provinces have been treated. It is their interests which have been principally compromised, if any have been compromised; but I do not believe that even that has been the case; or that British interests, with boundaries extending for nearly 3,000 miles, with millions on millions of acres of territory, have been compromised. Let us think of the value of these lands, and do not let us set up difficulties, do not let us even take into consideration



the thousands, or (I am not inclined to underrate their value) the few millions of acres of extra territory. I don't undervalue the boundary of the Aroostook; but, a few thousands or millions of acres is nothing against the advantage of a permanent and satisfactory peace. And yet I would advise you to concede nothing inconsistent with your honour. I put out of the question the political aspect of affairs at the time this treaty was effected. I put out of consideration the political aspect of affairs at the time these disputes were settled. I do not ask you to look to the wars then being carried on in Afghanistan—to the wars being carried on in China—I do not ask you to look to the then state of our relations with France—I do not ask you to praise the treaty in connection with these circumstances—on the contrary, I believe that no dangers should ever induce you to make unjust and unwise arrangements. You are not entitled by any such considerations to sacrifice your North American colonies, and even if you had done so, I do not believe that your concessions would have laid the foundations of a lasting peace. You should do that which you believe to be wise and just; and make no undue concessions in order to preserve peace. Such concessions have a tendency to encourage the power to which they are made in its unjust demands; and I, therefore, place no stress on the position of affairs in other parts of the world at the time of the conclusion of the treaty. But, Sir, I say that that treaty was hailed with satisfaction by our North American colonies. The previous unsettled state of affairs had been felt as a grievous interruption to habits of honest industry—there had been no possibility of concluding sales of land—the uncertain position of affairs had interfered with business and industry; the inhabitants of our North American colonies gain much by the prospect of a continued peace. As far as public sentiment can be traced by the declarations of the public press, I find that nine-tenths of the newspapers published in these provinces are in favour of the treaty. The people, then, are not disturbed by those apprehensions of danger in the event of war, so long dwelt on by the noble lord. They are sensible that those eventual dangers which will be brought on them by allowing the approach of an American army within thirty miles of Quebec, were nothing compared to the hazards to be encountered were the question left unsettled. They thought all such fears as those insisted on by the noble lord, were subordinate considerations, and they rejoiced in the adjustment of the question. There is one more point on which I must touch before I sit down. The noble lord has spoken at great length of a map recently discovered. He seems to think that that map so discovered affords conclusive evidence of the justice of the British claims. Now, Sir, in the first place, let me observe to the noble lord, that cotemporary maps may be—when the words of the treaty referred to by them are in themselves doubtful—they may be evidence of the intentions of those who framed them, but the treaty must be executed according to the words contained in it. Even if the map were sustained by the parties, it could not contravene the words of the treaty; but the noble lord considers that a certain map which has been found in the archives of the foreign-office at Paris, is conclusive evidence of the justice of the British claims. Now, Sir, I am not prepared to acquiesce in any such assertion. Great blame has been thrown upon Mr. Webster with respect to this map. He has been charged with perfidy and want of good faith in not having at once disclosed to Lord Ashburton the fact of his possessing this map. Now, I must say that it is rather hard, when we know what are the practices of diplomatists and negotiators, I say it is rather hard to expect that the negotiator on the part of the United States, should be held bound to disclose to the diplomatist with whom he was in treaty all the weak parts of his case, and I think, therefore, that the reflection cast upon Mr. Webster—a gentleman of worth and honour—are, with respect to this matter, very unjust. This map was, it is true, found in the archives of the foreign office at Paris, and a letter of Dr. Franklin's has also been found, having reference to some map, but there is no direct connection between the map so found and the letter of Dr. Franklin. In general there is such a connection, as in the case of maps referred to in despatches; but there is none in this case. There is nothing to show that the map so found is the identical map referred to by Dr. Franklin in his letter; and nothing can be more fallacious than relying on such maps. For let me state what may be said upon the other side of the question with respect to maps. We made inquiry about those maps in the foreign-office at Paris, and we could find none such as that in question at first. We have not been so neglectful in

former times with respect to the matter as the noble lord seems to think. We made inquiries, in 1826 and 1827, into the maps in the foreign office at Paris, for the purpose of throwing light upon the intentions of the negotiators of 1783. A strict search was made for any documents bearing in any shape upon the disputed question, but at that time neither letter nor map could be found. However, there were afterwards discovered, by a gentleman engaged in writing a history of America, a letter and a certain map, supposed by him to be the map referred to in the letter. In answer to our first inquiry, as I have already stated, no such map could be discovered. The first which we received from the foreign office at Paris, was a map framed in 1783, by Mr. Faden, geographer to the King of England. On that map is inscribed—"A map of the boundary of the United States, as agreed to by the treaty of 1783: by Mr. Faden, geographer to the King." Now, Sir, that map placed the boundary according to the American claim, yet it was a cotemporary map, and it was published by the geographer to the British King. There was a work, which I have here, a political periodical of the time, published in 1783, called *Bewe's Journal*. It gives a full report of the debate in parliament upon the treaty then being concluded, and, in order to illustrate the report, it also gives a map of the boundaries between the countries as then agreed to. That map, Sir, also adopts the line claimed by the United States. On subsequent inquiry, at Paris, we found a map, which must be the map referred to by Mr. Jared Sparkes. There is placed upon that map a broad red line, and that line marks out the boundary as claimed by the British. It is probably a map by M. D'Anville, of 1746, and there can be no doubt but that it is the map referred to by Mr. Jared Sparkes; but we can trace no indication of connection between it and the despatch of Dr. Franklin. To say that they were connected is a mere unfounded inference. But there is still another map. Here—in this country—in the library of the late King, was deposited a map by Mitchell, of the date 1753—that map was in the possession of the late King, and it was also in possession of the noble lord, but he did not communicate its contents to Mr. Webster. It was marked by a broad red line, and on that line is written "Boundary, as described by our negotiator, Mr. Oswald;" and that line follows the claim of the United States. That map was on an extended scale. It was in possession of the late King, who was particularly curious in respect to geographical inquiries. On that map, I repeat, is placed the boundary line—that claimed by the United States, and, on four different places on that line, "Boundary as described by Oswald." Now I do not say that that was the boundary ultimately settled by the negotiators; but nothing can be more fallacious than founding a claim upon cotemporary maps, unless you can also prove that they were adopted by the negotiators: and when the noble lord takes it for granted that if we had resorted to arbitration we should have been successful in obtaining our claims, I cannot help thinking that the matter would be open to much discussion. Indeed, I do not believe that that claim of Great Britain was well-founded; that it is a claim which the negotiators intended to ratify. I cannot say, either, that the inquiries which have been instituted since Mr. Sparkes's discovery have materially strengthened my conviction either way. I think they leave matters much as they were, and nothing, I think, can be more delusive than the expectation that, if the question were referred to arbitration—the decision would inevitably have been given in your favour, in consequence of the evidence of maps, which would not be regarded as maps recognized by the negotiators themselves. And then, Sir, with reference to the maps discovered subsequently to the conclusion of the negotiations conducted by Lord Ashburton. The noble lord opposite has stated that his predecessor in office had made all possible inquiry into the matter, and possessed all the elements of information connected with it. Lord Ashburton, then, had a right to draw the same conclusion. He had a right to presume that he was sent abroad in possession of all the elements of information on which a satisfactory conclusion could be come to, and therefore the subsequent discovery of the map in Paris, even if it could be positively connected with Dr. Franklin's despatch, would be no ground for the impeachment of the treaty of Lord Ashburton, or for proving that he had not ably and honourably discharged his duties. If blame should fall upon any one, it should fall upon those who have been conducting these negotiations for years. But I think that I have shown that no blame can be attached either to Lord Aberdeen or Mr. Canning; that they did

what they could to search the archives of the foreign office at Paris for information connected with the subject. The documents lately discovered were not kept in the political department of the French foreign office, but in the historical department, and it was thus that while they had eluded former search they had come to be discovered by Mr. Jared Sparkes. Nothing must be said as impeaching the accuracy or good faith of that gentleman, but he himself admits that the map which he discovered could not be traced to have had any connection with the despatch of Dr. Franklin. I am not aware that there is any other point noticed by the noble lord to which I have omitted to refer. As I said before, I deeply regret that the noble lord should have brought forward such a motion as he has to-night proposed. Most willingly would I have consented to the production of additional papers on this subject, if I could have done so consistently with my sense of public duty. In consenting to a change in the line awarded by the King of Holland, as I have before stated, our chief object was to consult the security and the military defence of our North American colonies. I think it must be quite evident to the House that it would be inconsistent with my duty to present any correspondence bearing upon that subject. I should also decidedly object, in the case of a negotiation which has been brought to a successful result, to lay upon the table of the House all the confidential communications which may have passed between the executive government of this country and the individual by whom they were represented. I do not believe that there is any precedent which would warrant the production of papers of this nature under such circumstances. Where the endeavour to conclude a treaty has failed, and where it might be necessary to appeal to the House for its opinion, it might be justifiable to lay before the public the whole correspondence on the subject. My objection to produce the correspondence required by the noble lord does not arise from any mere consideration of the interests of the government. As I before stated, we adopt the conduct of Lord Ashburton—we approve his conduct, and we hold ourselves responsible for it. If, therefore, the noble lord should wish to move a direct vote of censure, without calling for further documents, he may involve the government in that censure; but, acting upon the principles on which men in office must act, I am bound to consider whether it be consistent with the public interests to produce the confidential communications between the government and their representative, Lord Ashburton; and I must state that I think the production of such correspondence would be most injurious to the public interests. It is, however, competent to the noble lord to press his motion to a division; but if the noble lord does adopt that course, it will be with a view of calling upon the House to mark its condemnation of the government for having sent Lord Ashburton to the United States to conclude this treaty, and to censure Lord Ashburton for the course which he has pursued. I do hope that the House will not lend itself, so far as Lord Ashburton is concerned, to such an act of injustice. That noble lord, following the course which he has uniformly pursued, influenced only by a desire to promote the public welfare, and to maintain peace between this country and the United States, sacrificed his own private convenience—his private ease—in order that he might undertake this mission. Lord Ashburton and Mr. Webster have both been the objects of condemnation in their respective countries. Lord Ashburton has been, in this country, the victim of anonymous calumnies; and I am confident that no hon. member of this House could have sanctioned those calumnies, who would have adopted any other course than that of proposing a direct motion of inculpation, calling upon the House to pronounce its censure on the conduct of a man so aspersed. The motion of to-night is in itself a complete vindication of, and triumph for Lord Ashburton. If a powerful party can bring forward no other motion reflecting upon the conduct of Lord Ashburton than—not a vote of censure—not a motion implying the slightest blame—but a mere proposal for the production of papers, which the author of the motion knows cannot be produced—I say that any vindication of Lord Ashburton is wholly unnecessary. The nature and character of the motion itself constitute the vindication, and the triumph of Lord Ashburton. The noble lord is afraid to propose a vote implying censure, lest I should move an amendment, which would be carried by a vast majority, approving of the treaty, and of the conduct of Lord Ashburton. The private character of Lord Ashburton—much as I regard that noble lord—is to me

a matter of comparative unimportance, compared with the public interests which are involved in the decision which the House may adopt upon this motion. The decision of to-night, if to-night a decision is come to, will involve the opinion of the House as to the adjustment of the differences between this country and America. I do not mean to say that all the subjects of difference between the United States and this country have been adjusted by this treaty but I speak of those peculiar differences which caused considerable exasperation in both countries, and which afforded reason for apprehending the disturbance of tranquillity. If you are desirous for the maintenance of peace—if you believe that this negotiation has contributed to lay the foundation of peace—then I call upon you not to be misled by a plausible motion calling for further papers to imply a doubtful and equivocal opinion; but if, upon the whole, you are satisfied that the conduct of the government and of its representative, Lord Ashburton, has been influenced by pure motives—that it has been wise and just—that it has contributed to lay the foundation of a better understanding with the United States—then I do intreat you, whatever be your party differences from us, whatever be your political principles, to mark your opinion in favour of peace by negating the motion of the noble lord.

Debate adjourned.

## SUPPRESSION OF THE OPIUM TRADE.

APRIL 4, 1843.

Lord Ashley having presented several petitions on the subject of the opium trade with China, praying that the House would adopt effectual measures for its abolition, concluded a powerful and impressive speech by moving a resolution to the effect, that on account of the injurious tendency of the trade to our manufacturing interests, and its utter inconsistency with the honour and duties of a Christian kingdom, steps be taken, as soon as possible, with due regard to the rights of government and individuals, to abolish the evil.

SIR ROBERT PEEL was surprised at the conclusion to which his hon. friend (Sir R. Inglis), and his noble friend the member for Liverpool (Viscount Sandon) had come, with reference to this resolution. Here was a matter of the greatest delicacy and importance, involving a revenue of £1,200,000, when the revenue of India is in a state requiring the utmost care, and his hon. friend and his noble friend called on the House to adopt a resolution which would injure the revenue to the extent he had stated, and compel the cultivators of the soil to give up another portion of their scanty earnings. In a matter of this delicacy he could not help expressing his surprise at the admission of his noble friend, who said that the resolution should be modified, and that parts of it required consideration, and should be amended. His hon. friend who spoke last, said that there was now an able negotiator at the court of China, and who, it was possible, might by his exertions do much to modify the evils of the trade. Now, how did his hon. friend know that some such beneficial results were not in the course of being brought about, through the exertions of this able negotiator? If such negotiations were pending, and if there was a chance of changing the feelings of the Chinese government on the subject, so that some amicable arrangement could be effected, was it not unwise to interfere by adopting a course like the present? Might they not defeat the object which the negotiator had in view? This resolution prohibited the growth of opium, and supposing that the Chinese government heard of this resolution, the hopes that might otherwise be entertained that, by diplomatic means, the object in view would be obtained, would be entirely at an end. If there was one thing more important than another, for the House of Commons to maintain its weight and authority in the country, it was that it should weigh well the resolutions to which it came. A resolution was not like a bill, for one vote decided the matter; and there was no opportunity of reconsidering it, as there were various stages at which a bill could be thrown out. Ought the House, then, after the admissions of his noble friend, and his hon. friend, to come to a vote of this kind to-night, which would at once decide the matter? Why not rather adopt the other course which had been proposed, and declare that the House was not in such a state, as regarded their then knowledge of the subject, as to enable

them to vote on a resolution which they were told by its supporters required amendment? But what was the resolution of his noble friend, of whose motives he spoke with the utmost respect, doing justice to the humanity which induced him to bring the subject forward, and also to the ability which his noble friend had displayed on the occasion; but he knew his noble friend too well not to know that he was willing that his resolution should be canvassed with the utmost freedom. What was his noble friend's resolution? "That it was the opinion of the House of Commons, that the continuance of the trade in opium, and the monopoly of its growth in the territories of British India, is destructive of all relations of amity between England and China."

This was the first part of the resolution, and it excluded any possibility of legalizing the trade in opium. But it was also impossible entirely to interdict the trade; for opium, besides being produced in our Indian possessions, could be obtained from Turkey or from Manilla, or British capital would be engaged in cultivating it in the state of Malwa and other places. Would the House aver, that the "continuance of the trade in opium is destructive of all amicable relations? and at the same time decide, that the monopoly of the growth in the hands of the East India Company is unwise? There were two questions to be considered; one, whether you will vote, that if this country should sanction the illegal trade in opium, that would be contrary to the wishes of the Chinese government; and another, perfectly distinct from this,—whether by this resolution, you can prevent the growth of the vegetable in our possessions in India. He would show why it was better to postpone their coming to a decision on the subject. The matter had not only occupied a considerable share of attention from the present government, but also from the late administration. The late government instructed Sir H. Pottinger to communicate with the Chinese government on the subject. Now, had Sir H. Pottinger acted at all in a spirit favourable to the opium trade? Did not Sir H. Pottinger, on a recent occasion, almost stand alone, while he had to confront the displeasure of powerful parties in China, in consequence of the part which he took in condemnation of that traffic? Sir Henry Pottinger had been instructed to make a respectful application to the Chinese government on the subject, and to show them the impolicy of endeavouring entirely to interdict the trade. He was instructed to show in how many countries this vegetable could be produced, and to point out the great extent of the coast of China, and the almost impossibility of putting down the smuggling trade in opium; and he was directed to point out the tranquillising effect in one respect, and the advantages that might be obtained from it as an article of revenue, if the Chinese government would look at the question in the same way as European governments regarded questions of this kind—namely, getting rid of smuggling by legalising the trade, and imposing a duty on the import. This was a matter of such importance, that he was sure the House would excuse him for reading a portion of the instructions that had been sent out by the present government to Sir Henry Pottinger, to guide him as to the course that he was to pursue. He referred to this extract from the instructions to Sir Henry Pottinger, for the purpose of proving to the House, that her Majesty's government was not indifferent to the question, but was fully aware of its importance, as well regarding the interests as the honour of this country; and also to show that it condemned the principle of British subjects, with immense capital, engaging in a traffic against the municipal laws of the Chinese. The instructions were written by Lord Aberdeen to Sir H. Pottinger, and were dated 29th of December, 1842. The extract, which he would read, was as follows:—"Whatever may be the result of your endeavours to prevail upon the Chinese government to legalise the sale of opium, it will be right that her Majesty's servants in China should hold themselves aloof from all connection with so discreditable a traffic. The British merchant, who may be a smuggler, must receive no protection or support in the prosecution of his illegal sale; and he must be made aware, that he will have to take the consequences of his own conduct. Her Majesty's government have not the power to put a stop to this trade on the part of the British smuggler; but they may impede it in some degree by preventing Hong Kong and its waters from being used as a point by the British smuggler, as a starting point for his illegal acts. That is to say, when Hong Kong is ceded—until that, the smuggling of opium cannot be prohibited there; but as soon as it is ceded, you will have

power to prevent the importation of opium into Hong Kong, for the purpose of exportation into China."

Did not that prove, that this important question had not escaped the attention of her Majesty's government; and such being the case, was not the course marked out in the instruction he had just referred to, a much wiser course than that proposed in the resolution? If they adopted it, the chances would be, that the negotiations of the able man to whom his hon. friend had alluded would be put a stop to; he therefore urged upon his noble friend the propriety of leaving the matter in the hands of her Majesty's government, so that the object which his noble friend so anxiously had in view should not be defeated. So much for the illegal traffic in this article. Now, with regard to the other question, whether it were politic or just for the House of Commons to attempt to interdict the growth of a certain vegetable by the people of India, within the territory of the East India Company? He was afraid, that a very erroneous construction would be put upon the motion of his noble friend. He was sure that his noble friend's intention was a just and a good one; but when he was called upon to interdict the growth of opium, in order to benefit the manufacturers of this country, he became doubly unwilling to sanction this resolution; first of all, because upon that ground it was assumed, that the growth of this vegetable ought not to continue, and secondly, it was most unwise that we should undertake—because persons in another country abused the use of it; because they had not a sufficient control over their own appetites; because, by their own good sense, they could not abstain from the use of the vegetable, it was most unwise that, therefore, the English government should resort to the extreme step of preventing the growth of it altogether in their possessions in the East. He thought, that it had been shown in the course of the debate, that there could be no control over the growing of opium beyond the British provinces. In the state of Malwa there was in one year produced 10,000 chests, and if we chose to attempt to control the growth there, we could have no security that British capital would not be taken to other spots, where the climate and soil were favourable to its growth. This was not a question, however, of absolute prohibition—we could not prohibit the growth. The question was, whether it would not be better to attempt its regulation? If they could not interdict the growth, the question they had to decide was, whether opium should be grown under the regulations of a monopoly, or under free trade? He implored the House to act with great caution in this matter. If it were a question merely affecting the commercial interests of this country, he would ask the House to come to no hasty decision, but to weigh calmly all the points connected with the subject; of how much greater importance was that when the interest of so large a country and so great a body of people was at stake? If you abolish monopoly altogether, and substitute in its place free trade, the House could not anticipate the evils which may arise to India itself. With regard to this question, he would refer to the opinion of Lord Cornwallis. What does his lordship say on the point? Lord Cornwallis had many opportunities of studying and watching the interests of the great country committed to his charge. When examined in 1786 by the East India Company with reference to a free-trade in opium, his lordship said, that he was opposed abstractedly to all descriptions of monopoly. He had maturely and deliberately considered the question, and he must confess that he saw the great advantages which resulted from keeping the opium trade in the hands of the government. He expressed an opinion decidedly in favour of monopoly. Lord Cornwallis thought it was necessary in order to protect and preserve the public interest. He would refer the House to another authority, the opinion of Mr. Mill, the historian of British India. That gentleman, a man of great talent, and whose opinion certainly ought to carry great weight on a question of this character, took the same view of the matter. Mr. Mill was in favour of monopoly. He considered a free-trade in opium would lead to great abuse of the opium trade in India. Mr. Flemming also expressed a similar opinion in favour of monopoly and against free-trade. If that House consulted all the authorities on the point, it would be found that a monopoly of the trade of opium was considered preferable to that of free-trade. He did not ask the House to enter upon a consideration of this question with the view to its settlement this night. He asked the House to vote for the previous question, and not for the abstract resolution of his hon. friend. How was it possible that they could affirm this resolution

with the imperfect information which the House possessed on the subject? They were going to affirm a resolution in defiance of the opinion of Lord Cornwallis, in defiance of the statement of Mr. Mill, that monopoly ought not to be abolished, that it was necessary for the well-being of that country that a free trade in that drug should not be established. Opium was an article of agricultural produce. He considered it very questionable whether the House had a right to limit its growth, in order to introduce into China, with much greater advantage, the produce of British manufactures. What has been our policy with regard to that country? India had a flourishing cotton manufacture; that, this country had destroyed. India is in a different position from what you found her. If you destroyed her manufacture of cotton, you left her in undisturbed possession of her agriculture. If the traffic in opium could be legalized, it would be most unjust, if, for the purpose of opening a market for the British manufactures, you adopt measures which must inevitably have the effect of destroying the agriculture of India. Are hon. members so very sensitive on the subject of opium? Did we not derive a large revenue from tobacco; a revenue to the amount of £3,400,000 on the tobacco smoked and chewed, to excite and stimulate us. [An hon. member: And compose us.] And this in addition to a duty on gin, spirits, brandy, and wine, luxuries which men who had no command over their appetites could and did abuse. We who raised £8,000,000 or £9,000,000 by the duty on barley alone, and £3,400,000 on a weed which many considered most noxious, would yet interdict the growth of opium in India in order to preserve the morals and take care of the health of the Chinese. The Ryots were very glad to grow opium, because, according to Lord Cornwallis, there was a degree of protection derived from it against undue and unauthorised exaction, which was not the case with other commodities; and, moreover, the cultivation of indigo and opium was healthful to the inhabitants. Was it for the House to say to the people of India "we will prohibit the cultivation by you of that part of your agricultural produce which is most safe, most profitable, and most healthy," and to do this in order to substitute the cotton manufacture of this country, in making which we employed a child for twelve or fourteen hours a day. He did say that it was not quite fair, after we had destroyed the cotton trade of India by the superior cheapness of our own, to destroy also its chief agricultural produce. It was absolutely necessary to consider this question with great caution in the present state of India, in the present state of the labouring population, and in the present state of the revenue; seeing that if that revenue were deficient, additional sums must be derived from direct taxation which would fall upon labour and be paid out of the produce of the soil. His noble friend said, that £1,000,000, or £1,200,000 a-year was a small amount; but they might depend upon it that the revenue in India was a matter of the utmost importance, and that they could not diminish the revenue by one million without engendering the necessity for fresh taxation, which must fall on the labouring population of that country; and unless they were perfectly clear as to the justice of the change they were about to make, they ought not to subject to additional burthens those who were already taxed to the utmost advisable extent. The resolution declared:—"That the continuance of the trade in opium and the monopoly of its growth in the territories of British India is destructive of all relations of amity between England and China; . . . and that steps be taken as soon as possible, with due regard to the rights of government and individuals, to abolish the evil."

They might depend upon it that it was not by the summary course, even if they could abolish the trade, that they could effect this abolition safely. He would not at that late hour of the night, enter into any further discussion; he trusted he had said enough to induce the House to believe that her Majesty's government were not negligent in this matter, that it would be unwise to pass this resolution on a single night's debate, that its terms were too decisive and emphatic, and that, upon the whole, the best course would be to leave the subject to her Majesty's government, for their cautious consideration. He did not ask the House to reject the resolution; he did not ask them to negative it; but, in the present state of the revenue of India, he only asked the House to leave the subject where it ought to be left, in the hands of her Majesty's ministers.

Lord Ashley ultimately withdrew his motion.

## SUPPLY—BRITISH MUSEUM.

APRIL 7, 1843.

SIR ROBERT PEEL, in proposing the annual vote for the British Museum, said, that as there were such ample details with respect to it in a paper which had been laid on the table, it would not be necessary for him to go into any lengthened explanation. The estimate was £2,640 more than that of last year. The chief of this increase was £1,500 for the completion of the collection of English scientific works in the library. Another addition was an increase of £450 for binding books. He was happy to state, that there had been a great increase in the number of visitors during the last year. In 1841, the number of visitors was 319,000, while last year the number had increased to 547,000, showing an increase of 220,000 in one year. He thought that after this it was unnecessary for him to say one word more in recommendation of the vote. He should, therefore, propose that the sum of £32,576 be granted for the establishment of the British Museum, for the year ending April 5, 1843.

In reply to Mr. Hume, who objected to the constitution of the trustees of the institution, and thought that the superintendence of this establishment should be placed under some responsible officer of the government,—

Sir Robert Peel said, the hon. gentleman had stated that the government had no control at the board of trustees of the British Museum, whereas six members of the cabinet were *ex officio* trustees. So far, too, from their having no influence, the first lord of the treasury had always a very great influence, as it must be with his sanction that the vote was proposed; and he would venture to say that any reasonable suggestion as to the management of the Museum made by the first lord of the treasury would be attended to by the trustees. The hon. gentleman stated that formerly only seventy-five persons were admitted to the Museum each open day in the course of a week, whereas at the present time not less than 30,000 had been admitted in a single day. Did not this circumstance prove that the trustees of the Museum were anxious to afford every facility for the access of the public? In the year 1840, the number of visitors was 247,000; in 1841, it was 319,000; and last year the number had increased to 547,000. If, then, the hon. member would contrast the present management with that which obtained formerly, he would find that there was every desire to afford accommodation to the public. Again, in the year 1810, the number of visits made to the reading-rooms for the purposes of study was 1,950; in 1815 the number was 4,300, but last year the number was 71,000. It was to him most gratifying to find the large number of persons that passed through the Museum without any circumstance occurring that could reflect even the slightest discredit on them. The orderly and decent conduct of the visitors to the Museum, even on the most crowded days, must afford the utmost gratification to every reflecting mind. The habit of order inculcated by visiting this institution in this way must have a great moral effect, and this was produced in addition to the gratifying the curiosity of the people. With respect to the admission of young children to the Museum, he would only observe, that they might be exposed to inconvenience and some risk in a crowded day; for instance, on any occasion when 30,000 persons passed through the Museum. So far, also, from the trustees not being willing to adopt the recommendation of the committee, he would observe, that they were gradually doing so; and in the present year they had made arrangements to carry out the recommendations of the committee with regard to the synopsis. Again, the public were greatly indebted to the enterprise of Mr. Fellows for a most valuable addition to the contents of the Museum, in the shape of the Xanthian sculptures; and the trustees of the Museum were about to send out that gentleman again to Asia Minor, to endeavour to obtain an additional number of these valuable remains of antiquity. \* \* \* \* The conduct of the hon. member for Montrose, in printing a cheap catalogue of the National Gallery, was in the highest degree creditable to him; and there was not one word which the hon. gentleman had said as to the cathedrals in which he did not entirely concur. He believed that access might be given to these edifices to the mass of the people with the most perfect safety, and that nothing but good could result from such access being freely afforded; even if



any additional precautions were considered necessary in the first instance, he could conceive no better way in which a portion of the revenues of chapters could be expended. It would be but a very small portion. Since the last discussion on this subject, the House was aware that a vacancy had occurred in the deanery of Westminster. He had filled up that vacancy with a gentleman, of whom he knew nothing personally, but who was recommended to him by his high professional and personal character; and in speaking with this reverend gentleman, Dr. Turton, on the subject, he had expressly told him that he could not give him a more satisfactory proof of any gratitude he might feel for the distinction which had been conferred upon him, than the exercising all the influence he should have, as dean, in procuring for the public free admission to the abbey. Dr. Turton had expressed his entire sympathy with him on this subject, and he had every reason to believe that the rev. gentleman would actively co-operate with him in carrying out this most desirable object.

Vote agreed to.

### IMPORT DUTIES—COMMERCIAL TREATIES.

APRIL 25, 1843.

In the debate on Mr. Ricardo's motion, "That an humble address be presented to her Majesty, respectfully expressing the opinion of the House, that it is not expedient that any contemplated remission of import duties be postponed, with a view of making such remission a basis of commercial negotiation with foreign countries"—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: Unless I misunderstood the hon. gentleman who spoke last (Mr. Villiers), he made a statement which was gratifying to me to hear, and which I hardly expected to come from that quarter. For the hon. gentleman stated that some four or five years ago there had been a great export of bullion from this country that greatly inconvenienced and deranged the currency, in consequence of a sudden demand for foreign corn, and the inability of exchanging British manufactures for that article, but that within the last two or three years a great change had taken place in that respect—that there had been no sudden demand for foreign corn, but that there had been a ready demand for British manufactures, and that foreign corn had been imported into this country in a regular way, and in the ordinary manner of commercial intercourse. And the hon. gentleman said, that this regular interchange of British manufactures for foreign corn, of late years, had prevented that large demand for bullion which was apprehended by my hon. friend, the member for Shrewsbury. Now, I well remember that one of the prophecies of the inevitable consequences of maintaining the sliding-scale, as it is called, used to be, that there must be at intervals a sudden demand for foreign corn, which it would be impossible to pay for by the exportation of British manufactures. I think the hon. gentleman said, that that prophecy had not been fulfilled, but that there had been a regular interchange of British manufactures for foreign corn, and that though a large quantity of corn was imported in the month of August last—to between two and three millions of quarters—yet no apprehension was felt that it would derange our monetary system. That was the statement which the hon. gentleman made, and coming from such high and unquestionable authority upon such a point, I heard it with a very great deal of pleasure. I do not intend to trouble the House with many observations on the present occasion. I well know the peculiar difficulty under which I at this time speak on the subject, considering that on next Monday week my right hon. friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, intends to submit the usual financial statement to the House. There being only ten days to elapse before that discussion takes place, in which a full consideration of every subject connected with the fiscal arrangements of the country must necessarily be entered upon, I feel how very inconvenient it would be were I to allow myself to go into a discussion of details at the present moment. I apprehend that the main and single question before the House is this; "is it wise on the part of the House of Commons, by an abstract resolution, to declare that you shall not seek for any reduction of the import duties on your

own manufactures into foreign countries in consequence of, and as an equivalent for, any reduction of duties imposed by you on the importation into this country of the produce of those countries, but that we shall fetter the discretion for all time to come of the executive government, and lay down to-night, after a debate of three or four hours, this important principle—that you shall not attempt by commercial negotiation to procure any reduction of the import duties imposed by foreign countries upon your own manufactures, and that when you are considering the policy of any reduction of duties on foreign produce into this country, you shall not endeavour to obtain a corresponding reduction of duties imposed on your own articles of produce, and that even if negotiations for forming commercial treaties are now pending, whereby you hope to obtain certain reciprocal advantages, yet you shall (for, by the resolution now proposed, if carried, you will be bound to,) relinquish all those advantages, and to tell the country with which you are negotiating, that it is not necessary for them to give you an equivalent in return for that which you are about to concede to them, for that you do not look for any corresponding advantages.” I need hardly say that I am the last man to maintain the principle directly opposite to the one involved in such a declaration. I think I gave a sufficient proof of this in the tariff of last year. I then declared that I considered that our domestic interests, in all these arrangements, were of primary consideration. I laid down the principle, that it would not be wise in us to punish ourselves, because other countries refused to adopt similar arrangements as to their import duties. These principles I laid down last year, and I adhere to them still. But it is quite a different thing to propound principles when you are applying them to practical details, to that of laying them down merely in the shape of abstract propositions. Consider the many questions there are to be taken into account before you can apply such a principle. There is the state of the revenue—the comparative claims which different articles of commerce, to which taxation applies, have upon you. Even admitting the principle that all taxation is an evil, and supposing you are only determined by the state of the revenue, and by the obligation of providing for the interest of the national debt, and of the necessary annual expenditure, still these constitute such demands upon you as to make the power of reducing taxation necessarily very limited. But the difficulty is enhanced when you have present to your consideration the comparative claims of different articles on which the reduction is to be made. Shall you take the raw article—shall you take some great article of consumption—or shall you take an article of luxury? Then, again, what chance have you of preventing the duty being evaded by smuggling; and what will be the expense of protecting the revenue? Surely all these are important questions applying to each separate article of trade. Then, with reference to vested interests, as the noble lord said, there are the respective claims of the colonial interests, and of the interests of foreign countries. All these are matters deserving the utmost consideration when you come to deal with details, and are not to be disposed of by an abstract principle embodied in a resolution of the House of Commons. I was surprised to hear the noble lord (Lord John Russell) say, that he was disposed to support the present motion. Why the noble lord has been for ten years trying to make commercial treaties. He has even boasted of some success in his efforts. When I said, last year, that we were engaged in making commercial treaties, up got the noble lord, and also the noble lord, the late Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and exclaimed, “What credit do you deserve for that? You know that we commenced the work, and have prepared the way.” But now the noble lord says, that unless I give him some assurance, which he knows I cannot give him, he is disposed to support the resolution now proposed to the House. In the Import Duties’ committee Mr. Porter was examined, and he was asked,—“Are you at the head of the statistical department of the Board of Trade?” He answered, “I am.” “How long have you been connected with that institution?” “From its first establishment in 1832.” “Have you been engaged in effecting a commercial treaty between this country and France?” The answer was, “I have.”

Now, we found these negotiations pending. They had been suspended in consequence of the affairs which had occurred in Syria. We resumed these negotiations, but now, to-night, by a sudden resolution, we are to forego every advantage, and proclaim to France, “we contemplate making reductions in the duties upon

articles of your production; but you are distinctly to understand that we look for no return from you." That, I think, in the present state of this country, is a piece of superfluous liberality which the House ought not to sanction. In the course of this very year, I heard the noble lord publicly declare it to be his opinion that nothing could be more essential to the permanent interest of this country than to make good commercial arrangements with the United States. I myself heard the noble lord declare that, "of all the commercial arrangements which this country could enter into, that which would be most essentially beneficial would be a good tariff with the United States." Is the noble lord, then, now prepared to consent to the proposition of his hon. friend, and to proclaim to the United States that we looked for no equivalent from them for any reduction we might make in our import duties on their produce? It is true the noble lord endeavours to break the fall by saying that if I will give him some assurance, he will not support the resolution. But what assurance can I give him some eight or nine days before the discussion on the budget? Will the noble lord specify any particular tax which I could propose to reduce? The noble lord knows that I must decline to enter into any discussion of details. I state now, as I stated last year, that I think our own interests ought to be the first consideration. If a duty cannot be levied, in consequence of its producing a system of smuggling, the prevention of which would be a greater expense than the revenue to be raised, and if that, united with the monstrous evils produced by the immoral practice of smuggling, by which we not only lose the revenue, but corrupt the manners and habits of the people—am I to say that I will maintain that duty permanently, because no other country will reduce its duties on our produce? By no means. But let us not lay down general principles in the abstract; let us reserve them for the particular cases in which they are to be practically adopted. Take, for example, our commercial arrangements with Portugal and France. I do not regard our commercial relations with Portugal in a merely pecuniary point of view; I think it of great political importance that we should strengthen the bonds of amity between that country and this, by means of an intimate commercial intercourse. In the same manner I look upon our commercial connection with France. I should not estimate the advantage of an extended commercial intercourse with France merely in respect to the amount of pecuniary gain that may result from it; but I value that intercourse on account of the effect it is calculated to produce in softening down prejudices between the people of the two countries, and in promoting the feeling of amity and good will between two great nations. I should regard that mutual intercourse in commercial affairs as giving an additional security for the permanent maintenance of peace. Let us suppose the case of a duty on an article in respect to which there is no danger from smuggling, but the revenue on which can be easily collected—an article of luxury—is it not perfectly open for me to consider whether I shall reduce the duty for the purpose of obtaining some reciprocal advantage for British manufactures? I do not consider our commercial relations with any country as a mere question of a balance of trade, I do not look upon any supposed balance against us a measure of loss. If, for example, we import from Russia the produce of that country to the amount of £5,000,000 a-year, and we export to Russia only £1,200,000 a-year, making a difference of £3,800,000 in the amount of our imports from Russia over our exports to that country, no doubt no fallacy could be so complete, no mistake so absurd, as to assume that this country sustained a loss to the extent of the £3,800,000, because that amount must necessarily be made up by our trading with some third country. That I quite admit; but while I do so, surely I may contend that a direct is more beneficial than an indirect intercourse. Surely it is better for this country to have a direct intercourse with France and with Portugal, even independently of the political advantages which must arise, by having the bonds of friendship more firmly linked together, than that we should pay our debts to France, or that she should pay her debts to us, by means of a trade with a third country—Portugal. Does the hon. gentleman mean to contend for this principle—that any remission of duty which is desirable for us in regard to our own domestic interests, ought not to be postponed with a view of producing a reduction of duty in other countries on articles of British manufacture? That, I apprehend, is the principle which the hon. gentleman maintains. Now, even if that

principle were sound, I should doubt the policy of proclaiming it. Depend upon it, we have prejudices enough to contend with in other countries, without throwing away any advantages by a gratuitous declaration of a principle like this. The noble lord says, "Suppose a taste for British manufactures arises, can foreign governments control it? and can they prevent its being gratified by any duty they may impose?" That may be very true; but how can you best encourage that taste? Take Portugal for instance. How will you be most likely to beget a taste for British manufactures in Portugal? Is it not by directly introducing our cottons and woollens into Portugal? And if, by reducing the duty on port wine imported into this country, I can induce Portugal to reduce the duties on our cottons and hardware imported into her markets—if I can introduce our cottons into Portugal, and they take the taste of the people, the value of having them at a cheap rate would soon be appreciated, and will not that be an advantage to the manufactures of this country? The reduction in the duty on port wine may be a good thing in itself; but if, by a treaty with Portugal, we can not only have that reduction but also secure the reduction of duties on the importation of our manufactures in Portugal, is it not better to obtain the double reduction of duty than the single reduction? The hon. gentleman, however, by his resolution, would prevent the executive government from obtaining any such advantage. The noble lord (Viscount Howick) does certainly push the doctrines of free-trade to an extravagant length; it is to him a matter of entire indifference how high the duties are which foreign countries impose upon our articles—"If we import," says the noble lord, "we must pay somehow or other." Now, that doctrine of the noble lord, and also his other position, that this resolution would have the effect of depriving the foreign-office of the temptation of writing nine-tenths of the useless correspondence which it now produces, are the grounds upon which he will vote for this motion; and although he may think the tendency of this motion to diminish the labour of the foreign-office is a very good thing, it is hardly a sufficient reason for supporting the resolution of the hon. gentleman. Then, says the noble lord the member for London, "I will prove the advantage of a diminution of your import duties, independent of the conduct of other countries, from a reference to the article of brandy;" and then he stated that the exports of brandy from France in a certain year amounted to a certain quantity, and the imports of brandy into England for the same period amounted to 1,200,000 gallons less; and it was quite clear, therefore, he said, that there must have been an enormous quantity of smuggling; but, unfortunately for the noble lord, the facts are exactly the other way. In the year 1834, the exports of brandy from France were 1,744,000 gallons, and therefore, according to the noble lord's statement, the imports into England in that year ought to have been only 647,000 gallons; but, in fact, the imports into England were three millions of gallons, showing apparently an excess over the whole quantity exported, and so as to every year downwards since 1834. Do I therefore contend that there has been no smuggling? Not at all; it only proves that the noble lord's argument is without foundation, and the records of the French custom-house are not to be depended on. But the terms of the resolution itself, are not such as I can concur in. The hon. mover does not say "Let your own domestic interests alone be regarded;" but nine or ten days before the budget is to be produced he calls upon the House to adopt this resolution:—"That an humble Address be presented to her Majesty, respectfully expressing the opinion of this House, that it is not expedient that any contemplated remission of import duties be postponed, with the view of making such remission a basis of commercial negotiations with foreign countries."

"Contemplated remission!" Contemplated by whom? The hon. gentleman has heard that it was in contemplation to reduce the duties on port wine; we contemplated that reduction in the hope that Portugal would reduce her duties on our hardware, cottons, and woollens. Now, there is the hon. member for Sheffield—does he, would his constituents, think it no object to get our hardware freely admitted into Portugal? Even supposing it to be wise to reduce the duties on port wine without any equivalent, is it not, I ask, a perfectly legitimate object to say to Portugal, "We are going to reduce our duties on port wine, there is no absolute necessity for it, but do you, Portugal, take a corresponding course with reference to our hardware, cotton, and woollen goods. Accustom your population to the use of British manu-

factures, and then we shall feel confident that the advantage, as it will be mutual, will be permanent." Then we may be sure that the taste for our manufactures will be encouraged, and that the Portuguese would soon seek for freer access to our markets. But the hon. gentleman tells me I am not, even if I can, to obtain this advantage: "You must not postpone (he says) even for a month, any contemplated remission of duties, though that remission were only contemplated in the hope of getting an equivalent."

Supposing the reduction of the duties on port wine could be effected with advantage to this country, does it necessarily follow, because we contemplated the reduction of the duty on port wine in the hope of obtaining an equivalent, that when that expectation has been disappointed, port wine ought still to have the preference over all other articles? Suppose we could afford to run the risk of losing £300,000 or £400,000 of revenue, ought port wine to be the article selected for the benefit of that remission? Might it not be a question whether the duty on wool ought not to be remitted instead; and, if we contemplate a remission of that duty, why should we give the duty on port wine the preference? I advise the House to reserve to itself the power of applying sound principles to particular cases, as they arise. When any proposition for the remission of any duty is submitted to the House by her Majesty's government, every individual member will have the opportunity of opposing that proposition, of making a counter proposal, and of urging the claim of one particular article in preference to that of another; and that I think would be a much wiser course, one much less likely to involve the House in embarrassment and difficulty, than to proclaim an abstract principle as a matter of commercial negotiation, about which even the warmest free-traders widely differ; for since I came into the House I have read a postscript of a letter, addressed to me by a gentleman, a zealous free-trader, whose authority cannot well be disputed on the other side of the House. I see hon. gentlemen opposite turn away from Colonel Torrens now, as a gentleman of no authority at all—but I refer to his opinion for the purpose of showing that upon this subject even strenuous advocates of free-trade are not united. Colonel Torrens says:—"I would beg to submit for your consideration, what appears to me to amount to a mathematical demonstration, that a reduction of the duties upon foreign productions, unaccompanied by a corresponding mitigation of the duties imposed by foreign countries upon British goods, would cause a further decline of prices, of profits, and of wages; and would render it doubtful whether the taxes could be collected, and faith with the public creditor maintained."

Colonel Torrens calls, too, in aid of his opinions other high authority; and he names one, for whom, whatever may be the connection of the hon. member opposite with him, he cannot feel greater respect than I do—Mr. Ricardo, in whose chapter on trade the doctrine is involved. He says also, that the same doctrines have been established by Mr. Senior and Mr. Pennington—whom Col. Torrens calls one of the most profound thinkers of the day. If, then, these differences of opinion exist—if these are speculative doctrines upon which even free-traders are not agreed—I hope the House of Commons will not make itself a party to an abstract resolution embodying these views without much more mature consideration; and I hope, therefore, the House will negative the motion of the hon. gentleman. I repeat what I have already stated, that in my estimation, our own interests are the main consideration in the reduction of duties, but I doubt whether our interests would be best promoted by granting, without reference to other considerations, a free admission for foreign productions; at all events, I trust that the House will avoid a course which my political experience has taught me is always attended with embarrassment—that of laying down an abstract principle to be the guide of the government in matters of so much delicacy and difficulty as commercial negotiations.

The House divided: Ayes, 61; Noes, 135; majority against the motion, 74.

## TREATY OF WASHINGTON—LORD ASHBURTON.

MAY 2, 1843.

Mr. Hume proposed a resolution, conveying the thanks of the House to Lord Ashburton, for the manner in which he had conducted the negotiations which led to

the recent treaty with the United States for the settlement of the north-eastern boundary question, and other matters in dispute between the two countries.

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, when this question was previously under discussion, I had an opportunity of entering so fully into the subject of the negotiations which were begun and brought to a successful close by Lord Ashburton, that I shall feel myself relieved from the necessity of now going at length into the subject. The noble lord who spoke last has made the important admission, that when the result of these negotiations first became generally known, there was in this country one feeling of almost universal satisfaction. I apprehend that satisfaction would not have been felt, if any undue or discreditable concessions had been made by the government. It is the character of the British people to be more ready to resent an affront than to tolerate undue acquiescence. But what the noble lord says is perfectly true. The feeling of satisfaction at the termination of the long protracted discussions between the two countries was almost universal, and it afforded, as I conceive, the strongest possible testimony of the merits of the negotiation. The people of England concur in the sentiments expressed by the noble lord towards the latter part of his speech, deprecating the commencement of hostilities with the country which had set the example of independence—they deprecate war and carnage with a country united to ours by a community of origin, a community of language, and a community of religion; and I believe that the noble lord will now find it a difficult task to persuade the people that they ought not at this time to be satisfied with an arrangement in which, on its first announcement, they were ready and willing to concur. The noble lord says, and he says correctly, that the vote now proposed to this House is not strictly in conformity with precedents. For that reason I have declined to move the vote of thanks to Sir Henry Pottinger, of which the noble lord has given notice for this night. Although I fully admit all the noble lord can urge—although I fully agree that the greatest prudence, the greatest judgment, and the greatest moderation, have been shown by that gallant officer in the conduct of the negotiations entrusted to him; and although government has manifested its confidence in that distinguished person, by requesting him to remain in his present station, yet, because I felt that it would be contrary to precedent, for a minister of the Crown to move such a vote of thanks, I have refrained from submitting to the House the motion the noble lord intends to propose. But I will ask the noble lord this question. Was there ever an instance in which three statesmen whose opinions are entitled to such respect as those of the noble lord who has just spoken, the noble lord, the late Foreign Secretary, and the right hon. gentleman, the member for Edinburgh—was there ever such a case in which men who swayed public opinion to such an extent, came forward so decidedly to express an unfavourable opinion as to the result of a negotiation, and the conduct of a diplomatist? Was there ever, I ask, a case in which such charges were made, or in which a government shrank from asking the House of Commons at once to affirm, or decidedly to negative, such sentiments? The noble lord has stood in the position of the leader of the House of Commons—the other noble lord by his side, has lately filled the office of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and is generally believed to have more knowledge and experience in these matters than any other man living—of the great talents and abilities of the right hon. gentleman on his right (Mr. Macaulay), I have had frequent opportunities of expressing my opinion; and, I will ask, is it just, is it equitable, that three such men should attempt to discredit—nay, to ruin—the reputation of a public man, who has undertaken a public duty from the purest of all possible motives, and because they conduct their attack according to precedent, those who support and defend him are to have no opportunity of asking for the opinion of the House of Commons—of determining whether or not such discredit is cast upon him with the sanction of the legislature and the public? One noble lord has described this negotiation as a capitulation; the right hon. gentleman has said that it is a stain upon the honour of the country; the other noble lord says he entirely agrees in those opinions, and yet they refuse a motion calculated to put their opinions to the test by a vote of the House. I do say, that if the motion is unusual, it flows from a course which is entirely without precedent. But the noble lord says we are not to judge of the motion by the terms of it. We are to look back, forsooth, to the opinions which the mover once expressed upon some matters relating to Canada. The opinions of a man who spoke

upon an entirely different subject, are put forward by the noble lord as a test by which to try whether the motion is just or unjust. Why, the noble lord was not always so ready to disclaim the support of the hon. member on account of his opinions regarding Canada. The time was, when, turning round to his hon. friend, he could find it convenient to forget his opinions respecting Canada, and could even condescend to receive his vote to support or to rescue him in his hour of difficulty and danger. Why, it would have been as absurd for the noble lord to have said, "I can't go out into the lobby with you, because of your conduct concerning Canada," as if I said now, "This motion is just; there is no reason for negating it; but three years ago its mover said something on Canadian affairs, of which I cannot approve, and, therefore, I shall vote against his proposition." Sir, I think the noble lord might have found many precedents for insisting upon a distinct vote of the House in cases where a motion of condemnation has been made; ay, and I think, too, that he might have found those precedents in cases where the authors of the motion, were not deterred from going to a division by the fear of being left in a minority. And here, let me again ask, is the course you are pursuing a creditable course? Is it fitting, that entertaining the opinions which you hold—is it for the honour of the House of Commons—is it for the honour of party connections or public men, that after throwing every discredit on a diplomatist by your speeches, you should not have the manliness to come to a vote? That was not the course which Mr. Windham pursued when he brought forward his motion concerning the treaty of peace in 1801. He made a motion condemnatory of the treaty; he stood nearly alone; Mr. Windham, Mr. Elliot, and a few others, were divided from the whole House upon the question; but they did not throw out insinuations right and left and then shrink from a division; they had the courage and consistency, after stating their opinions fairly, to ask for a vote in the affirmative or negative. On that occasion, Mr. Windham was supported, I believe, by only nine other members, and yet Lord Hawkesbury, finding what he considered to be a censure moved upon the government, deemed it to be his duty to move a counter-resolution. After expressing a hope, that the House would not separate without giving an opinion on the subject, he accordingly proceeded to move a resolution, in which it was declared—"That this House is satisfied, that his Majesty has, on the whole, wisely consulted the interests of his people in having concluded a definitive treaty, founded on the basis of these preliminaries."

That was Lord Hawkesbury's course on Mr. Windham's motion. But I will give you another instance. In 1823, when Mr. Macdonald brought forward his motion, concerning the negotiations relative to Spain, the mover, towards the close of the debate, found himself supported by so small a minority, that he was anxious to withdraw his proposition. Mr. Canning, however, feeling that the conduct of the government was questioned, would not allow the withdrawal of the motion, but pressed it to a division, when only twenty members were found to divide with the mover. Mr. Canning said, on that occasion, that he would not have asked for an approval of the policy of the government, but finding it condemned, he called upon the House to say if they joined in that vote of condemnation! In the same way, I would not have asked for a direct vote of approbation, but finding the conduct of the government impugned, I now call upon the House to give a distinct vote upon the motion before us with the view of discouraging the practice of disparaging public men without allowing them an opportunity of vindicating themselves. After all, Sir, what miserable cavilling is this about the language used by Lord Ashburton in reference to the Madawaska settlement! Having a point to gain for Great Britain, he made use of the language which he deemed strongest and most likely to achieve it. And is it, then, to be said, that he sacrificed the honour of his country, because he did not insist on the letter of that language? It would go hard with negotiators if they were bound by this notion with respect to language used by them in attempting to gain the most favourable terms for the countries by which they are employed. The real question at issue is, not Lord Ashburton's language, but where would you have now been if the Washington treaty had not been concluded? The real discussion does not turn on the Madawaska settlement, or on the river St. John. But the great and important question which the good sense of the country will decide is, whether, with respect to a nation with which we have such close connection by trade,

affinity, and otherwise, on which our own colonies border for an extent of 1,500 miles, we should remain in a condition of perpetual uneasiness, approaching to hostility? The intelligent people of England asked, if it was right that after so protracted a diplomatic conflict, which had been going on for the long period of ten years, without any prospect of its amicable termination—nay, the people of this country had a right to ask, whether this matter could not, without any dishonourable concessions on the part of England, be brought to a satisfactory settlement? Is it not a subject of congratulation that this state of things has terminated with honour to this country? Where would you have been at this moment if this had not taken place? Would you have been in possession of the disputed territory? My hon. and gallant friend (Sir. H. Douglas), who is better acquainted with this matter than any man in this House, has truly stated that this territory had been gradually slipping away from you, that an American citizen had been arrested by his authority on a portion of the territory, for committing a trespass, upon which you have permitted the Americans to build a fort without making any remonstrance. Why did you allow this to take place? Is that the way of vindicating the honour of England and maintaining your own boundary? The noble lord said, "Open another negotiation, based upon the report of our own commissioners." But, however able Messrs. Mudge and Featherstonhaugh may be, I happen to hold in my hand the message of the president of the United States, transmitting a report of the board of commissioners appointed to survey the north-eastern boundary, which will show that the probable effect of sending more commissioners to America would only be to excite more contention. The report to which I refer, and which was presented to Congress, was made by commissioners Renwick, Major Graham, and A. Talcott, and the Americans consider their commissioners entitled to as much confidence as we justly place in ours.—"That the line of highlands (they say) claimed by the United States, is, as the argument on the part of Great Britain has maintained it ought to be, in a mountainous region, while that proposed by Messrs. Featherstonhaugh and Mudge does not possess this character; that it is also, in the sense uniformly maintained by the United States, the height of land, which that of Messrs. Featherstonhaugh and Mudge is not; that it fulfils, in every sense, the conditions of the proclamation of 1763, the Quebec Act of 1774, and the treaty of 1783, which no other line that can possibly be drawn in the territory in question can perform."

Sir (continued the right hon. baronet), this is the construction put upon the report of Messrs. Mudge and Featherstonhaugh, and, without expressing any opinion on the correctness of that report, is it probable that the commissioners from Maine and Massachusetts, and the governments of these states, would have acquiesced in the reasoning of our commissioners. I think that such a result was not at all probable. But, again, the noble lord says that the United States senate has passed a bill (by a majority of two I believe) appropriating the Oregon territory as a portion of the possessions of the United States. To that I oppose, in the first place, this circumstance, that the executive government of the Union, which has in its hands the conduct of diplomatic negotiations, has acceded to a proposition of the English government, or rather made one to us, that the question of the Columbia River should be amicably settled between the two countries. And next, I must remind the noble lord, that the House of Representatives, a popular body, as open as the senate to the desire of an increase of territory—that the House of Representatives, with all the correspondence before them, still refuse to sanction the bill agreed to by the senate, so that the session passed without anything being done. I may further say, Sir, that I have every hope that, by a prudent and temperate course of proceeding, these difficulties will be amicably arranged. It is to this that the noble lord refers for the purpose of obtaining a paltry triumph. I will not refer to the right of search or visit. What I have on a former occasion stated to the House on this subject is fully borne out by subsequent events. I said, and I say again, that no authority was given to make concessions on this point. We claim no right of search, or detain vessels, if we do know them to be American. If we do visit the vessels, knowing them to be American, we do it on our own responsibility, at our own risk and peril; and we are liable to be compelled to make compensation should our officers make any mistake. And what has brought this question into its present position? I tell the noble lord that if he had limited himself to the claim of visiting



suspected vessels, no angry feeling would have arisen. But the noble lord captured; or authorised the capture, of American vessels. In February, 1841, I heard that the noble lord issued orders to British captains not to capture American vessels—that vessels *bona fide* American should not be captured. Then from that it is to be inferred that previous to this order such captures must have been made. The noble lord, I believe, acquiesces. Now, it has been admitted that if an American vessel were evidently equipped for the slave-trade—carrying fetters and provisions sufficient for ten times the number of her crew, we have no right whatever to meddle with that vessel. But when it appears that we for some years claimed a right to visit and search vessels, knowing them to be *bona fide* American, it is no wonder that excited feelings were created in the States, on the question of the right of visit, which made it extremely difficult to come to a satisfactory and amicable arrangement with reference to that subject. The noble lord says that we have made great concessions to the United States by that article of the treaty which provides for the employment of vessels by both countries on the coasts of Africa to suppress the slave-trade. The article in the treaty alluded to is as follows—“The parties mutually stipulate, that each shall prepare, equip, and maintain in service, on the coast of Africa, a sufficient and adequate squadron, or naval force, of vessels of suitable numbers and descriptions, to carry in all not less than eighty guns, to enforce separately and respectively, the laws, rights, and obligations of each of the two countries for the suppression of the slave-trade; the said squadrons to be independent of each other, but the two governments stipulating nevertheless to give such orders to the officers commanding their respective forces, as shall enable them most effectually to act in concert and co-operation, upon mutual consultation, as exigencies may arise, for the attainment of the true object of this article; copies of all such orders to be communicated by each government to the other respectively.”

I must now remind the House and the noble lord of what Mr. Fox asked the American government to do. All along the coast of Africa there were swarms of ships carrying the American flag. Mr. Fox pressed upon the American government the importance of acceding to a mutual right of search, and various advantages which were likely to accrue were pointed out, and among others, that of the capture of rich prizes. In 1839, nothing effectual having been done in the suppression of the slave-trade, Mr. Fox again urged upon the government of the United States the importance of mutual exertions for the suppression of the slave-trade upon the coast of Africa, but nothing was done. In consequence of the course which has now been pursued, France, it is alleged, will say, that it is possible for this country to suppress the slave-trade without exercising the right of search. Why was it not just as competent for France to prefer an agreement of this sort before the treaty was concluded as at present. It has been thought right that an arrangement should be come to which for a time should not be liable to be annulled at the will of popular assemblies, and that for five years, therefore, there should be a joint squadron on the coast of Africa, adopting effectual means—and, in my belief, they will be effectual—for the suppression of the slave-trade. But you say, that we have effected nothing; that we have left the Oregon treaty all unsettled. Now all this is said for the purpose of possessing the people of this country with the idea, that Lord Ashburton has failed as a negotiator. However, with respect to this, my firm persuasion is, that the two countries will enter shortly upon an amicable settlement of the Columbia question. Then, with respect to the boundary question, all the accounts that her Majesty's government have received from America, concur in representing that the boundary states are animated equally with ourselves by a sincere desire that the line of demarcation should be drawn as soon as possible. They have appointed engineers, they wish that the line of demarcation should be drawn in one year, they are actuated to all appearance by precisely the same feelings as we are. This is what we hear from the United States. With respect to the right of search, the American government has communicated to us their instructions to their officers, but as it is impossible for me to speak of the nature of them at this stage of the proceedings, I can only state it is my firm belief, that they can and will be carried into effect. On the whole, then, my persuasion is, that it will be most desirable to leave the governments of the two countries to settle these questions amicably between themselves; and with the knowledge that they possess of their

great reciprocal interests, with the knowledge that any bad feelings which might mutually arise would only recoil on themselves, and notwithstanding the indications of adverse feelings which may be displayed for a time by small bodies, my firm belief is, that it will be found by this treaty concluded by Lord Ashburton we have not only laid the solid foundations of peace, but that we have done that which is most desirable for our common interests, and that, as far as negotiations can effect that object, these negotiations will issue in establishing permanently amicable relations between the United States and ourselves. If such be the feelings of the House, looking to the motives of our distinguished negotiator, and seeing the many sacrifices he made to accomplish that for which he went out—that he sought no honours nor distinctions, and had no other motive for his exertions than his desire to unite the two countries in relations of permanent peace—looking at the difficulties which he had to encounter, that he had the assent of no fewer than seven commissioners from Maine and Massachusetts, in addition to the assent of the American government, to gain, if, revolving all these matters in your minds, you should, as I hope you will, think that the conduct of Lord Ashburton demands your approbation, and will justify you, if departing from ordinary precedent, you should consent to vote with the government, and—disbelieving the charges that have been brought forward against him, charges made, but immediately after withdrawn, that he was an American citizen, or had some pecuniary interest of his own to serve—if you think that he has taken a comprehensive view of the subjects comprised in this treaty in spite of the petty cavilling about the noble lord's language, and the Madawaska settlement, and done nothing in his conduct of the negotiations but what is right and just, I hope that you will give your support to the motion of the noble lord. I mean the motion of the hon. gentleman [laughter], and record your approbation of Lord Ashburton's proceedings. Sir, my noble friend was compelled in the course of his speech to allude to a little hypercriticism, and gentlemen do seem a little fastidious about this little mistake. I am glad, however, that I made no greater mistake—and if hon. gentlemen thought my argument unjust, they would not have fastened on this little error. I willingly yield to this correction, and I trust that they will support the motion of the hon. member for Montrose.

On a division the numbers were: Ayes, 238; Noes, 96; majority for Mr. Hume's motion, 142.

## REVENUE—THE BUDGET.

MAY 8, 1843.

The House in Committee of Ways and Means. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the conclusion of his financial statement, moved the following resolution—"That, towards making good the supply granted to her Majesty, there be issued and applied to the service of the year 1843, the sum of £47,994:12:3, being the surplus of Ways and Means granted for the service of preceding years."

In the discussion which ensued—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said,—Sir, the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Baring) has given notice that an opportunity will arise for entering into a detailed discussion with respect to several of the matters connected with the trade of the country; and I think it more consistent with the public interest and the usage which has been generally observed upon similar occasions, to avoid entering into a discussion upon particular articles until that opportunity shall present itself. I must say, I think the temper and general tone of the right hon. gentleman were worthy of the situation he formerly held, and his determination to uphold the revenue in its present state, and not to hazard it by an undue reduction of taxation, were such as might be expected from his public character. The right hon. gentleman says, that last year I was particularly severe with respect to the failure of the produce of the 5 per cent. additional duty upon the customs and excise. I cannot say I think the right hon. gentleman is borne out by the facts of the case. The estimates of persons making financial statements are liable to error—their expectations may be disappointed—they profess, in short, only to give estimates, and are not to be severely blamed if the estimates

are not perfectly true. The right hon. gentleman expected a considerable sum from the addition of 5 per cent. to the customs and excise duties, and in that he was disappointed. But when I commented upon it, the circumstances out of which my comments arose were these:—I found a great deficiency in the public revenue. I was then considering how the deficiency might be made up. I said, shall I revive the tax upon leather? Shall I revert to the tax upon salt? Shall I re-impose the duty upon beer? or shall I follow the course taken by the right hon. gentleman, and propose a general addition to the duties of customs and excise? I was then discussing all the possible means of supplying the deficiency. I rejected them, and I said I thought it would be most unwise to tax articles which entered into the consumption of the great body of the people; that I doubted whether or no, if I did attempt to impose such a tax, the result would be to gain the required sum of money, and I came to the resolution, that upon the whole it was desirable to make a great effort to repair the deficiency in the revenue by a tax upon property rather than upon articles of consumption; but what I said upon that subject was this:—“I must here observe, that I am now merely exhausting the different means by which men might contemplate the supplying of the deficiency, and trying to show that increased taxation upon any articles of consumption will not afford relief. I wish to carry your judgment along with me. I said that the net produce of the customs and excise in the year ending the 5th of January, 1840, was £37,911,000, and the estimated increase in the customs and excise by the additional 5 per cent. was £1,895,000. Comparing, therefore, the income from customs and excise in 1840 with that in 1842—and I take 1842 in preference to 1841, because you can thus more fairly estimate the effect of the increased duty—I find, while the estimated produce of the customs and excise was £39,807,000, the actual produce was only £38,118,000, the actual increase being, instead of £1,895,000, only £206,000; not 5 per cent. increase in the amount of revenue, but little more than one-half per cent. realised in the attempt to impose 5 per cent. additional duty. In the depression of trade there may, undoubtedly, be circumstances sufficient to account for the expectations of the right hon. gentleman not having been realised, but still, making every abatement for these causes of decrease, I think it impossible not to admit that 5 per cent. increase of duty on articles of consumption would not produce 5 per cent. in net amount to the revenue.”

That was the conclusion to which I came. The right hon. gentleman was wrong in his, as I fairly admit I have been, in my calculations: I made them upon the usual data, but nothing can be more doubtful than an estimate. However, when the right hon. gentleman made the proposition of adding 5 per cent. to the customs and excise, he did not receive from me a very cordial support, and I said, I thought upon the whole, that instead of levying a new tax on consumption, he was wise in attempting to raise the required amount of revenue by the addition of a per centage on the customs and excise. The right hon. gentleman was disappointed to the extent of £1,600,000. However, I only referred to that to show that it was not politic to propose any great addition to the duties upon articles of consumption. Then, with respect to the great advantages to result from the imposition of the Income-tax, what I stated was this—that the imposition of an Income-tax would enable me to make considerable reductions in the duties on articles of consumption; and I ventured to utter this prediction—I will quote the very words I then used—I said—“I propose that the income of this country should bear a charge not exceeding 7d. in the pound, which will not amount to 3 per cent., but, speaking accurately £2 : 18 : 4 per cent., for the purpose of not only supplying the deficiency in the revenue, but of enabling me with confidence and satisfaction to propose great commercial reforms, which will afford a hope of reviving commerce, and such an improvement in the manufacturing interests as will re-act on every other interest in the country; and by diminishing the prices of the articles of consumption and the cost of living will in a pecuniary point of view compensate you for your present sacrifices.”

Now, although that prediction has been said to be falsified, I must say I think there has been from some cause or other that reduction in the price of the main articles of consumption, that to a person exercising due economy will compensate the amount of £2 : 18 : 4 per cent. which he pays in the shape of Income-tax. I take the case of a

person with £300 a-year, having to pay on each £100, £2:18:4. I very much doubt whether, in the case of that man, the reduction in the price of the various great articles of consumption does not, in point of fact, fully compensate him for the charge of between £8 and £9 he pays as a tax on income. So I say of a man with £5,000 a-year. He is called upon to pay £150 as income tax; if he is perfectly regardless of the fall in prices—if he do not take advantage of competition—if he will let retail dealers charge what they please, very well—he will have no compensation; but if he makes inquiry—if he looks after his own concerns, and avails himself of the lowness of prices, the man with £5,000 per annum can, with the present price of articles of consumption, effect a saving in his annual expenditure of more than £150. That was the prediction I made when I introduced the Income-tax. You may say the result has arisen from other causes; you may attribute it to a good harvest, or to something else; but the fact, I think, cannot be denied, that for every £2:18:4 per annum paid upon £100 income, there is an opportunity of making a saving of much more than that amount. At least, I know I have had the satisfaction of receiving various communications from parties possessing small and large incomes, in which they admit that by the exercise of proper economy a greater saving than I then predicted may fairly be made. I have been told by one hon. gentleman that in the article of timber alone he expects to realize a saving that will compensate him for the payment of the Income-tax. I made another prediction—that the reduction of the duties on several of those articles which entered largely into manufactures might afford the hope of reviving commerce. Certainly, without speaking sanguinely of the revival that has taken place, I expected it would have taken place at an earlier period. I did not contemplate the long-continued depression that we have had to encounter. In fact, the continuance of that depression, accompanied with great pressure on the working classes, necessarily entailing upon them great privations, and causing a reduced consumption of many articles, has mainly contributed to defeat the calculations I made, and to prevent the receipt of that amount of revenue which I anticipated. I am not speaking too sanguinely now. I shall not venture, after such frequent disappointments, to excite too great expectations; but I cannot help thinking that the facts to which my right hon. friend has referred, as having arisen within the last three or four months, do entitle us to entertain the expectation that the worst is past, and there is a hope of a progressive revival in the commerce of this country. The articles to which my right hon. friend referred, are articles in which a reduction of duty took place, and they are largely used in manufactures—olive oil for instance. Then there is the great increase in the consumption of cotton. Then, I hope we have seen the commencement of the recovery from depression in the wool trade; and I think such a combination of circumstances warrants the hope that we are about to see a revival in the commercial and manufacturing interests of the country. I deeply regret to see the depression continue in some branches of industry—in the iron trade, in the coal trade; and I am afraid the hardware trade has not yet shown any symptom of material recovery. But, looking at what has taken place in the cotton districts, and what is beginning to take place, I trust, in the woollen districts—looking at the demand for articles, which enter as elements of manufactures, I cannot help entertaining the conviction, although the expectations I held out have been deferred, still there is now a prospect they will be realized so far as they refer to a revival of the manufacturing industry and commercial prosperity of the country. I do hope the House will not press on the government, in the present state of the revenue, hasty and precipitate reductions of taxation; and that they will not forget the advantages they derive from the maintenance of public credit. It is impossible to deny that if the state of the finances of this country were prosperous, there might be an opportunity of reconsidering, with advantage, several of our duties. I do not deny it; but I entreat the House to bear in mind that, comparing our revenue with our expenditure, there does remain still, at least there did remain in the last year, a deficiency—if the whole receipts of the Income-tax had been realized within the year, we cannot deny that there was a deficiency in the last year. The right hon. gentleman says he does not now call for the abolition of the Income-tax. I think, in the present state of the revenue, there are few that would advise a repeal of the tax on property and income. I think there are few who will not admit that if the financial proposals of the late government had

been carried into effect, they would not have caused such an increase in the revenue of the country as to dispense with the necessity for an Income-tax. Where should we have been now if the Income-tax had not been imposed? There is a deficiency now. In discussions upon the budget it has always been usual to avoid anything like asperity or party spirit. I shall studiously avoid it upon the present occasion. There is no doubt a deficiency on the last year, of £2,400,000, but there are the arrears of the Income-tax due, which, if you could now realize and pay them at once into the exchequer, would considerably repair that deficiency; but there would still be a balance against you. The deficiency, therefore, of this year is not precisely of the same character as those of former years, because the arrears due, if raised, would redress the balance. When I proposed the Income-tax, what was the fact? The deficiency was not casual; there had been a growing deficiency for five or six years, and the full amount of the deficiency at the close of the year, when I proposed the Income-tax, was not less than £10,000,000. There was an increase of the debt in a time of peace to the amount of at least £10,000,000 for the year ending 1842. The late government, it is true, proposed a modification in the existing corn and sugar duties, but it can be conclusively proved, and I think they themselves will admit, that if their proposals had received the sanction of parliament, still the state of the revenue, as compared with the expenditure, on account of the Chinese and other wars in which we were engaged, would have rendered it imperatively necessary to resort to some other scheme for the purpose of raising additional income; and I now doubt whether any measure could have been devised for raising a sum approaching to £5,000,000, half so free from objection as that which I proposed—namely, the Income-tax. What other measure can now be suggested? The hon. member for Montrose says, reduce your estimates to the amount of £4,000,000 during the present year. Her Majesty's government have paid the utmost attention to this subject. They have considered the demands on our naval, military, and ordnance service, from every part of the globe; they have looked at the duties demanded of those who form that service, and they have come to the firm conviction that it is impossible, without endangering the health of the men employed, without sacrificing the efficiency of the public service, and probably increasing the expenditure greatly hereafter, that any such reduction could be made; and I apprehend that upon that point there will be a concurrent, almost unanimous, opinion of the House. Very few hon. members, looking at the state of the army, looking at the navy, looking at the demand for protection to commerce in every quarter of the world, believed that in the course of the present year we could have effected so great a reduction in our estimates. But we have in the present year made such reductions as we thought consistent with the efficiency of the public service, and effected a saving of £800,000; and these reductions have met with general assent. I did propose, certainly, that a vigorous effort should be made to replenish the public coffers by a tax on property. Although the estimates I made may have been incorrect, and although the period of revival of trade has been postponed beyond my anticipations, I see nothing in what has passed to discredit the policy of the great measure I then proposed—namely, the attempt to raise additional revenue by a tax on income. At the same time I admit, that the existence of a tax is no reason to continue it, if it be proved to be injurious, and it is now open to any hon. member to propose a substitute. But if it were proposed to repeal the tax, and substitute other taxation in its room, I feel perfectly convinced that a vast majority would support me in attempting to give effect to the experiment I made last year. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. F. Baring), and others, have said, that the imposition of the Income-tax had caused the defalcation in other branches of the revenue. I doubt that. The defalcation in other branches of the revenue have been caused by depression of trade, not from the imposition of the Income-tax. The receipt of a larger sum than I calculated upon only fortifies me in the opinion, that it was wiser in the present state of the country to obtain additional revenue from a tax on property rather than by increasing the taxes on articles of consumption. If there be any particular class of taxation that ought to be affected by the imposition of the Property-tax, it is that of the assessed taxes. I was distinctly told, that the effect of the Property-tax would be most apparent on the assessed taxes. I still doubt whether it will be the case; I doubt whether reductions in the excise and customs can be attributed with justice to the Income-tax. If

there were a great falling off in the assessed-taxes, then you might with some justice argue that that defalcation was caused by the increased tax on property. But the actual falling off in the receipt of the assessed taxes is only £200,000 on a receipt of £4,400,000; and, judging from any notices which have been given, I certainly have no reason to anticipate that the burden on property on account of the Income-tax will to any very material extent affect the receipts under the assessed taxes. We must hope, too, that the revival of trade, and the demand for manufactures, owing to the reductions of duty which have taken place, will more than counterbalance to the people the amount of the tax. As yet we have not seen the injurious effect of the Property-tax, either on the actual receipts of the assessed or any other taxes. With respect to the coal-duty, the sugar-duty, and the duty upon any other article, there appears to be a prospect of having them submitted to the House in detail upon some future occasion, and till then I think it will be infinitely better to reserve the discussion. I, at least, shall for one abstain from discussing them at present. It would have been infinitely more gratifying to me and my colleagues to be enabled, on account of the state of the revenue, to have proceeded in the course of the remission of duties on which we entered last session. My conviction of the principles which ought to govern the remission of duties, I must own, has been confirmed rather than abated in force by the experience we have had of the past. I wish most sincerely we could have reconciled it with our duty to have proposed further reductions in some duties; but in the present state of the revenue, adverting to the still continued deficit as compared to the expenditure, looking to the great importance even in a commercial point of view of maintaining public credit, we have come unwillingly to the conclusion, that it is not consistent with our public duty to propose the remission of taxation on articles of consumption, which would have been most agreeable to our feelings could we have reconciled it to our duty.

The resolution was agreed to, and the House resumed.

## ABOLITION OF THE CORN-LAWS.

MAY 9, 1843.

In the fourth night's debate on Mr. Villiers's oft-repeated motion—"That the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to take the Corn-law into its consideration, with the view to its immediate abolition,"

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows:—"The progress of this debate has confirmed the impression which I had before it commenced, that almost all the arguments which it was possible to adduce on each side of the House had been exhausted, and that it was not probable that any ingenuity on the part of any speaker could present either side of the question in a new point of view. I repeat, that what has passed in the course of this debate has confirmed that impression. In the course of this discussion, I have heard little that is new; I have heard little more than a repetition of former arguments. As for myself, having frequently been called upon to discuss this question—having had frequent opportunities of delivering my opinions upon it, I confess I have no new argument to offer; and nothing but the importance of the subject, and the position in which I stand, would have induced me to overcome the reluctance which I feel again to present myself to the House. I must, however, for one, thank the hon. member for Wolverhampton—for the manner in which he has presented his motion to the House. With the opinions the hon. and learned member entertains on the subject, it is creditable to him that he has solicited the decision of the House upon the broad principle involved in his proposition. There was no subterfuge either in the motion or in the speech of the hon. and learned gentleman—there was no attempt to catch a stray vote by a plausible reference to the nature of the motion—the hon. and learned gentleman does not call upon the House to resolve itself into a general committee on the Corn-laws, but he asks the House to resolve itself into a committee on those laws, specifying the precise object for which he solicits that committee, namely, to effect a total and immediate repeal of those laws. I shall address myself to that which is properly the subject of debate, and assign the reasons why it is impossible for me to give my assent to

that proposition. The principle involved in the resolution is much wider than the resolution itself. The hon. and learned gentleman proposes that to-night we should affirm the total and immediate repeal of the Corn-laws; but the great principle is further involved in the resolution, namely, that every duty on every article which savours of protection shall be at once abolished; and I think it would have been better, considering the principles avowed by the hon. and learned gentleman, that, instead of moving for the immediate and total repeal of the Corn-laws, he should have made his resolution concurrent with his argument, and have proposed to the House to resolve that all duties savouring of protection should be abolished. Depend upon it, Sir, if the present motion is carried, long prescription, vested interests, the application of capital under the existing law, cannot operate to prevent the application of that great principle to duties being protection, or as you call them monopoly and robbery. If that be true as applied to the Corn-laws, do not—as the hon. and learned member for Bath has said,—do not delude yourselves, for the same principle must be applied immediately and completely,—not by removing only duties imposed for purposes of revenue, but to every duty which operates as protection to any interests favoured by law. Can it be questioned—and this is the only point on which I quarrel with the fairness of the hon. and learned gentleman—can it be questioned that it would have been fairer to have advanced that principle boldly than to lay it down partially, when its consequences are so clear and apparent? But let us see what we are called upon to affirm by this resolution. Not a trade in this country, the produce of which is protected by a duty upon foreign articles entering into competition with it, can hope to retain that protection. There must be an immediate and complete repeal; for, observe, what your own argument is: you say that on the establishment of a certain principle, the practical execution of that principle is immediately to follow. From your argument, no vague inference is to be drawn. You have sounded the knell of protection by the adoption of that principle, and, therefore, you must immediately proceed to abolish, as respects manufactures, without exception, all and every duty upon the import of foreign manufactures which operates as a protection. Of course, then, this is a subversion of the whole arrangement that was made last year by the adoption of the tariff. How complicated are the consequences to which this leads. Every duty arranged last year by the tariff must undergo instant revision. If you are unwilling to sacrifice the revenue, you must, for instance, restore the duties on colonial timber, because the imposition of a duty on foreign timber operates as a protection to colonial timber. Are you prepared to abandon the duty levied upon foreign timber? it operates as a protection, and if you are not so prepared, the consequence is, that you must replace the duties on colonial produce, and therefore, I say, that by acceding to this motion, I must not only abolish every duty on every article of the nature of provisions, but I institute an immediate reversal of the whole arrangements made by the tariff of last year, excepting so far as the revenue is concerned. But the next consequence that flows from the adoption of this resolution, is the immediate subversion of the whole of the colonial system. The entire colonial system will at once be swept away, unless you will leave the colonial interests to drag on a precarious existence, without letting the capitalist know what is the legislation by which he is to be governed; in fact, it follows, as the necessary consequence of the adoption of this resolution, that the whole colonial system must be at once abolished; that is to say, that this country must not, on a careful revision of the colonial system—must not, after a gradual and well-considered attentive consideration of the abstract principle, but upon a resolution to be affirmed to-night, consent to subvert at once the whole colonial arrangements so recently made. Of course, I apply to the colonists the benefit of the principle we claim for this country. At present, our manufactured goods are admitted into the colonies on a footing more favourable to us than to foreigners. Whether wise or unwise, this is the nature of our colonial connection. This country said to the colonies: “I will be responsible for your security and internal order, and the return I ask for is the favour and privilege of the admission of my manufactures.” This is granted; and for this we give the colonies corresponding advantages. This is the system which has endured for years; it is a system that may be unwise, and contrary to sound principle in the abstract,

but would any sane assembly of legislators, knowing the extent of our colonial empire, consent by the adoption of the resolution of to-night at once to subvert, without delay or consideration, the whole of that system. Have you, who support this resolution, considered the effect the adoption of its wide principle would produce upon countries like India and Canada? Admitting, for the sake of argument, that the principle involved in the resolution is wise, did you ever find any writer on political economy who recommended legislation on a principle of this kind? Do I say that I would protect these interests for the sake of individuals? No; but I say, looking at the extent of capital invested on the faith of the law, it is impossible to contemplate what the consequences would be, not only to the landed interests, but to the manufacturers of this country and the interests of our colonists. The vote of the 4th of August in the national assembly of France, by which all privileges were abolished, was not adopted with less consideration than would this principle, if you ask now at once to deal thus with these interests. Can you answer this argument?—can you deny that if you affirm the principle of this resolution as professedly applied to the protection to land, there ought to be a repeal of every duty which gives protection, and which you call monopoly?—that monopoly ought to cease, that there ought to be no preference of colonial interests, and no sacrifices in return? [Mr. Villiers: "Hear."] I am glad that the hon. gentleman admits that it is a necessary consequence. But with that admission, I ask the House if it feels that it is in accordance with the national interests and security, by the vote of one night to adopt a principle like this? That is the question. You ought, as legislators, well to consider your votes—to anticipate the possibility that you may be in a majority. I am certain, if hon. gentlemen will admit that, that it is not honest, from the conviction that you will be in a minority, and will escape the practical consequences of your vote, to vote contrary to this admission. I give hon. members credit for the integrity of their motives, and I ask them then if they were responsible for the colonial interests of this country—if they were responsible for the public safety, and for the consequences that might ensue, not from injury to individual interests, but from the disturbance of capital to such an extent, invested under laws which I will admit, for the sake of argument, require careful revision and alteration—would they, by the vote of one night, risk the consequences which the pledge of such a resolution would give? Now, observe, I have the admission of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Villiers), which I expected, that though the principle of the resolution is applicable apparently to corn, yet there is no one article, whatever the extent of capital employed in producing it, the manufacture of which can be affected by the sudden import of immense quantities of foreign-produce, but, whatever the consequences may be, the manufacturers of it must be prepared to adopt the immediate application of this principle. If I were prepared to agree to such an abstract principle as that embodied in the resolution, I should shrink from its application. Those who have none of the responsibility imposed on the executive government of the country urge this measure; but no executive government would indirectly incur the responsibility of immediately announcing and applying such a remedy. From the legitimate consequences flowing from the resolution of the hon. gentleman, it does appear to me that I have stated conclusive reasons why, in the present state of this country, or in any conceivable state of this country, the representatives of the country should act with more caution and deliberation than that with which they will act if they affirm the resolution to-night. If the hon. gentleman should say to me, that which I am sure he will not say, that I am assuming that the resolution includes principles more extensive than it does, that it is applicable to corn only, even then it would be utterly impossible for me to assent to the resolution as applied to the trade in corn. Sir, I concur in much that was said by the noble lord, as to the general principle which should govern the consideration of this question; I remain as opposed to him as ever upon the practical measure to be adopted; but as to the general principle with which we should view alterations in the Corn-laws, I do not materially dissent from the noble lord. The noble lord laid down the principle as strongly as it was put by any gentleman on this side of the House, that even if these laws required alteration, you ought to be cautious in retracing your steps and applying remedies. That was the principle as laid down by the noble lord, and he supported his opinion by reference to high authority—to the authority



of Adam Smith, and he might have done it by reference to Mr. Huskisson. Every one who has considered this subject, the more carefully he has considered it the more convinced he has become of the abstract principle, and the more unwilling he has been to pledge the abstract principle by an incautious application of it to practice. I was sorry to hear the noble lord after he had admitted that principle, take an unfair advantage of an expression used by my right hon. friend the Vice-president of the Board of Trade, in saying that "he had placed the landlord on the footing of a sinecurist." My right hon. friend might have used the word "sinecurist" in enforcing the propriety of caution, where there were great vested interests at stake; but all that my right hon. friend said was, even where you are dealing with that which is the most obnoxious interest, even with the sinecurist, even there you recognise his claim for compensation: how much more, then, is there a necessity for cautious legislation, when you are dealing with the great body of landholders of this country, and with capital invested on the faith of the existing law? That was the argument of my right hon. friend, and the noble lord took an unworthy advantage of it in saying that my right hon. friend classed the whole body of agriculturists with the sinecurists, and placed them on the same footing. Again, I think with the noble lord, that not only for the protection of individuals, but for the public interest, great caution is necessary. I think with the noble lord, that the landed interest is entitled to protection upon the just ground of being called on to bear special burthens. [Hear, hear.] Sir, I am stating my opinion. I am repeating that I admit that having frequently discussed this subject, as I stated at the outset, it is difficult to allege any new argument. I am stating my concurrence with the noble lord with respect to the protection which ought to be afforded to agriculture on account of the burthens imposed on land which are not imposed on other property. It is the landed property of the country which maintains the church establishment. I say that the greatest writers on this subject have admitted that the tithes do constitute a peculiar burthen upon the land. [Interruption.] Permit me to state my own opinions; they are a fair subject for canvass. But I must say the advocates for liberality are the most intolerant of the opinions of others. My intention is to discuss this subject with the spirit and temper with which a subject of so much importance should be discussed. I shall avoid all personal imputations, and I shall not think it necessary to reply to those which have been advanced. If any one is to be deterred from expressing his opinions by abuse, or diverted from his argument by retaliating that abuse, it is impossible we can come to any conclusion; we cannot conduct the argument in a satisfactory manner, or in a manner worthy of the question. And I protest, because I may entertain opinions differing from the hon. gentleman, against the imputation being cast upon me, of acting from improper or corrupt motives. The imputation affects me little; I shall not follow the example of those who use such personal imputations, having a strong conviction that they recoil on their authors. I was stating that the land was subject to peculiar burthens; I should think no one will say it is not. I constantly hear this address made to the proprietors of land, "Beware of the course you are taking; the great manufacturing towns in the times of their prosperity have drawn the rural population within their limits. They have made no provision in the time of prosperity for the support of the labourers in the time of decay; and that they will avail themselves of the existing law—disgorge the superfluous and unemployed population on the land, and having extracted from them, in the time of manufacturing prosperity, all the good they could, then that they will not support them in time of difficulty, but will return them to the land, and the burthen of supporting them will be on the land." And, therefore, I should have expected a ready assent to my argument, that the land is called on to bear burthens imposed materially by the manufacturing districts. But observe what was the principle of the law; was it not the original principle of the law that the profits of stock-in-trade should be made subject to this burthen? Have you not departed from it? Why? Because the land is permanent, is tangible, is always visible; that there is less of inquisition, and less of exaction in levying the burthens on land, whilst you say it is impossible to determine the amount of stock or profit for the purpose of assessing it for the poor-rate or the county-rate, without occasional difficulty, and consequently you have abolished that principle of law, and the land is left alone to bear

that burthen, which the original principle of the law contemplated should be partially borne by the profits of stock-in-trade. I will take the single case of barley. I think you raise £8,000,000 or £9,000,000 a-year from the tax on barley. I think the duty is above £8,000,000, and, in addition, you subject the landowner to great difficulties in conducting his operations. You say to him, "In order to secure this revenue from a single article, we will interfere with the operations of your trade and subject you to peculiar supervision, interrupt you in the application of your capital, and prevent you from making the most of the barley you have." I know the answer to this statement will be, that this duty is not a burthen peculiar on land—that it is borne by the consumer. Let us try to apply the same sort of reasoning, supposing a tax were proposed to be imposed on the cotton manufacture. Supposing the manufactured articles of cotton were subjected to a duty for the purpose of raising £2,000,000 or £3,000,000, I apprehend the cotton manufacturers of this country would decidedly object to such an imposition. They would say, "At the time we are pressing you to take off the duties on raw articles, and while we complain of the duty on foreign raw cotton as a grievous exaction, to propose to raise two or three millions by a duty on manufactured cotton, would be an act of folly and insanity of which no man fitted to serve in office in this country could be guilty." If I answered them by saying that foreign silks and articles of foreign manufacture, which entered into competition with their goods, would come in more freely if their goods were taxed—that the tax on their goods would fall on the consumer, and that they (the producers) had no reason to complain—would they be satisfied with these observations? and, therefore, though I cannot admit that the malt-tax is, to the extent in which it has been represented, a burthen exclusively on land, yet as the removal of the malt-tax would give great facility to the operations of those concerned in the malting business, I must say that it is a heavy duty on an article of agricultural produce, which must operate as a disadvantage in the application of capital in that particular direction. For these reasons, I have a strong impression that on the ground of special burthens there is a claim for protection on the part of the land. The noble lord, the member for Sunderland, denies that the land has any claim for protection, and he yet would consent to a fixed duty for the purpose of raising revenue. Now, I think the noble lord, the member for the city of London, on the principle which he holds, that extreme caution is necessary in dealing with these complicated interests, and that (looking to the cost of production and the special burthens borne by agriculturists) land is entitled to protection—that noble lord, I think, would be able, on such a principle, consistently to advocate and maintain protection; but I must say my confidence in the maintenance of the protection offered by the noble lord, the member for Sunderland—namely, that a duty might be levied for the purpose of revenue, would be very weak indeed. In the first place, it is not clear, if there is no claim to such a duty on the ground of protection, that the duty, exclusively for the purpose of revenue, would be easily defensible; but of this I am sure, that the noble lord would find it more difficult to maintain in argument that if it were right to levy a duty on corn, domestic corn should escape from that duty. After all, what would a tax on foreign corn, though raised (it may be asserted) for the purpose of revenue—what would such a tax, from which British corn should be exempted, be, but protection under a false pretext? It would be neither more nor less than that. The noble lord, the member for Sunderland, contended that the land is entitled to no protection, and he said that if in 1828, a duty of 10s. had been imposed on foreign corn for the mere purpose of revenue, nobody would have found fault with it. If, then, the noble lord's proposition were adopted, to give protection by the circuitous mode of extracting revenue from foreign corn, to which revenue domestic corn should not contribute, it is my belief that the Anti-Corn-law agitation would not so soon cease as the noble lord supposed. With respect to barley, the principle of the noble lord is reversed, as I stated on a former night; and in this instance we have no scruple in taxing the domestic article. [Lord Howick: "There is no tax on barley—the tax is on malt."] The noble lord intimates that my argument does not apply, because the tax is levied on malt, and not on barley. Then, instead of speaking of a tax on corn, if I spoke of a tax on bread, would that satisfy the noble lord? For the reasons I have stated, and on the general principle, I

concur with the noble lord the member for the city of London, that the land is fairly entitled to protection on just and equitable grounds; and I dissent from the noble lord the member for Sunderland, feeling very little confidence in the protection he offers by means of a fixed duty, imposed for the purpose of revenue, and which, in the course of this debate, has been reduced to 4s. or 3s. With respect to the existing law, I differ from the noble lord the member for the city of London, still retaining my opinion, that if the noble lord attempted to impose a duty which he contemplated, whether it were 8s. or 10s., it would be very doubtful whether the levy of it could be ensured under circumstances, the recurrence of which we must anticipate. Acting on the principle which the noble lord opposite has advocated, that we should attempt a fair compromise of a long litigated question, I proposed, in the course of last year, with the concurrence of my colleagues, a measure which appeared to the government, under all the circumstances of the country, to be an equitable and fair proposition. We did contemplate and did effect, I admit, a very material reduction in the amount of duty levied on foreign corn. But this is not the only point on which we affected the landed interest. We removed altogether the monopoly of the supply of cattle and meat. We removed the prohibition which prevented the importation of foreign cattle and meat. This was hailed as a most satisfactory arrangement, and confident predictions were made by hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House that important consequences would follow from these measures to the trade of the country. I am now quite surprised to hear the tone of an hon. gentleman opposite. He says, that from the partial application of our principles announced last year no good has resulted, and that we have done nothing by removing the monopoly of the supply of cattle and meat. All this, he says, has afforded no relief to the country and no stimulus to commerce, and yet the conclusion to which he comes is, to recommend us to proceed in the course we have adopted and to carry our principles into effect. It would have been more consoling to us, and certainly more consistent with reason, if the hon. member had said, that the sound principles which we propounded last year had proved beneficial in their operation, not indeed to the extent which he expected, but still most beneficial, and this was an encouragement for us to proceed in the same course; but when he says that the ministers have done nothing, and that their measures have entirely failed, and yet at the same time encourage us to proceed in the same course, I really cannot understand the argument of the hon. gentleman. We removed the protection on domestic timber, seeds, and on a variety of articles, and extensive alterations were made. I believe the effect of those alterations has been most advantageous. I can make no retraction of the principles on which I then acted. I am satisfied with them and desire their application. Therefore I dissent from the hon. gentleman, and looking at the reduced price of provisions and the increased comforts of the labouring classes of this country, I cannot regard without satisfaction, generally speaking, the operation of the principles on which her Majesty's ministers have acted, though at the same time I deeply regret whatever partial distress may have been the consequence of our measures. The noble lord opposite (Lord Worsley) has asked me to give some assurance with respect to the future. Her Majesty's ministers proposed the Corn-law last year in the hope that it might be an adjustment of this question. They could not say that the measure should be irrevocably final and unalterable; but her Majesty's ministers had no dirty intention in their minds of proposing an abrogation of the Corn-laws. In a matter of this immense importance, I consider political support to be of no slight consequence; but, however painful it may be to lose it, I cannot attempt to conciliate political support by making any inconsistent declarations. Her Majesty's government offered this law as a fair and equitable adjustment of the question; and they thought it would be met in a fair and conciliatory spirit by the landed interests: and I never will say, with respect to any law of this nature, that the fear of losing political support shall induce me to sacrifice my opinion. I tell this to the noble lord, that I do not maintain the law, merely because it was passed last session; nay, I must admit, that if it were true that the law is irreconcilable with the interests of the country, and that, a better law could be proposed, it would be the duty of the government to propose, and parliament to adopt, such a law. It is utterly impossible, in a commercial matter like this, to combine influences for the purpose of maintaining, as you suppose,

your consistency; because it is not like a great political principle, it partakes of nothing of that character. But I say, that intervening experience has not convinced me that the law is a bad one. With the opportunity of watching its operation, I see no reason to infer that the principle of a fixed duty is preferable to that which I proposed. What were the objections which were offered against the law last year? Let us see what they amounted to. In the first place, it was said that it would have no effect whatever in diminishing the price of corn; and I remember that a most confident prediction on that head was uttered by one hon. gentleman, that it would keep corn at 72s. But there has been a material reduction in the price of corn. I know that some say, that is not in the least degree owing to the law; others again, attribute it to the law. However, the fact cannot be denied, that from some cause or other there has been a material reduction in the price of wheat, the main article of subsistence. I must say, that nothing surprises me more than to hear the cost of subsistence spoken of as a matter of indifference. The hon. member for Montrose, as I understood him, expressed himself utterly indifferent to the price of food. The argument was, that the high price of food was of no consequence if wages were high, yet no argument has been more frequent than that the price of food being higher here than on the continent, it is impossible for the manufacturer to compete with foreigners. It has been argued, too, that several millions of money per annum have been absorbed, by the high prices of corn; and a pamphlet was written by Mr. Greg to show that the quantity of money absorbed in the purchase of articles of subsistence prevented the manufacturers from having as large a market at home as low prices would have afforded them. That was the argument; there was the greatest advantage, it was said, in having the price of provision low, for then we could compete with foreigners, while at home it would enable parties to appropriate their money to the purchase of manufactured articles. Therefore I am surprised, whatever may be the cause of the price of corn being low, to hear that the reduction in price is of no advantage. But what is the object of all this? Is it not to try to raise an agricultural clamour about the lowness of prices. That is a most unfair and unworthy course. It was said again, that the importation of foreign corn would lead to the export of bullion, and derange the monetary system of this country. Well, there was a large importation of foreign corn last year, has there been any great export of bullion? At any rate, that has not taken place. It was said, also, that the system of averages which I introduced, would have no effect upon the admission of foreign corn; nay, it was said, that if it had any effect, it would be to diminish the average. Now it so happens that the effect of increasing the number of towns has been to increase rather than to diminish the average, and therefore to facilitate the admission of foreign corn. I was surprised to hear the hon. member for Wolverhampton repeat the statement over and over again, that I guaranteed to the farmer a price of 56s. I have seen this constantly stated:—"The First Lord of the Treasury promised that you should have a remunerating price of from 54s. to 58s., and now you have but 46s. How can you ever repose any confidence in him?"

My answer is a simple reference to statements which I did make. I was referring to the price of corn for some ten or twelve years before, and I stated all the difficulties of determining what would be a remunerating price; but I said the average of the ten or twelve preceding years was 56s., and I stated also, that upon the adjustment of the tithe commission the average was also taken at 56s., and that as far as the legislature was concerned, I thought it probable that the effect of this law would be to prevent oscillations to a greater extent than from 54s. to 58s. I further stated, that I did not see any advantage to agriculture in having the price of corn at a higher rate than 58s. But when you quote that, it is but fair that you should quote the qualification in the context. What was it that I said? At the same time, that I made a reference to the price of 54s. and 58s. I said this in the same speech, and immediately preceding that allusion—"Nothing can be more difficult than to attempt to determine the amount of protection required for the home producer. I am almost afraid even to mention the term 'remunerating price,' because I know how vague must be the idea which is attached to it. The price requisite in order to remunerate the home-grower must necessarily vary; a thousand circumstances must be taken into account before you can determine whether a certain price will be a sufficient remuneration or not."

Again, I said—"Now, if we take the average price of wheat which determines the commutation of tithes, the principle on which the Tithe-bill passed, taking the average of seven years, we find the price of wheat during those seven years to have been 56s. 8d. If we take the average of wheat for the last ten years, we shall find that the price has been about 56s. 11d.; but in that average is included the average of the last three years, when corn has been higher certainly than any one would wish to see it continue. Allowing for that excess of price, however, 56s. 11d. was the average price for the last ten years. Now, with reference to the probable remunerating price I should say, that for the protection of the agricultural interest, so far as I can possibly form a judgment, if the price of wheat in this country, allowing for its natural oscillations could be limited to some such amount as between 54s. and 58s., I do not believe that it is for the interest of the agriculturists that it should be higher. Take the average of the last ten years, excluding for some portion of the average the extreme prices of the last three years, and 56s. would be found to be the average; and, so far as I can form an idea of what would constitute a fair remunerating price, I, for one, should never wish to see it vary more than I have said. I cannot say, on the other hand, that I am able to see any great or permanent advantage to be derived from the diminution of the price of corn beyond the lowest amount I have named, if I look at the subject in connection with the general position of the country, the existing relations of landlord and tenant, the burthens upon land, and the habits of the country. When I name this sum, however, I must beg altogether to disclaim mentioning it as a pivot or remunerating price, or any inference that the legislature can guarantee the continuance of that price; for I know it to be impossible to effect any such object by a legislative enactment. It is utterly beyond your power, and a mere delusion to say, that by any duty, fixed or otherwise, you can guarantee a certain price to the producer. It is beyond the reach of the legislature. In 1835, when you had what some thought was a nominal protection to the amount of 64s., the average price of wheat did not exceed 39s. 8d., and I again repeat, that it is only encouraging delusion to hold out the hope that this species of protection can be afforded to the agriculturist. To return, however, to the subject; I again say that nothing can be more vague than to attempt to define a remunerating price."

Now, I think I have read sufficient to show that I did not undertake to guarantee by legislation any price whatever. With regard to the lowness of price, I think that the Corn-law of last year has not been the cause of it. When I speak of a reduction in the cost of living, I cannot claim either for the tariff or the Corn-law the full extent of that reduction. I fear the reduction in the price of agricultural produce has arisen to a considerable degree from that depression of trade and diminished power of consumption of which we have had too many melancholy proofs. I wish my agricultural friends to remember that I said before this discussion on the Corn-laws came on, that it was my firm conviction, as it still is, that the prosperity of the manufacturing and commercial interests of this country is much more essential to the prosperity of the landed interest than any Corn-law whatever. I am not using new language in expressing that opinion. I have said the same thing on more than one occasion before; and, Sir, if you could convince me that the Corn-law was the cause of the manufacturing depression which has existed, or, if I could bring myself to believe the exaggerated statements which have been made with respect to the cause of that depression, I should feel the strongest conviction that the agriculturists would best consult their own interests by consenting to an alteration. But I at once declare that I distrust those statements—that I do not believe the Corn-law to be the cause of the manufacturing depression. When the hon. gentleman tells me of former successes in trade—of the immense profits which were made by manufacturers in former years—let me remind him that all those successes and all those profits accrued under a Corn-law. If then the existing Corn-law be fatal to manufacturing prosperity, how does he account for the fact of such prosperity having occurred at former periods when the same law was in existence? I will show him that prosperity and the Corn-law have co-existed. It has been said that the greatest manufacturing prosperity of this country was in the years 1835 and 1836. The Corn-law was in operation during both those years. Yes, but your reply to this is, that in those years food was cheap. Why, so is food cheap now. It is nearly as

cheap now as it was in 1835 and 1836; and why should I admit that it is the existence of the Corn-law, which is fatal to manufactures, when I find that in those years you had the law in full operation, and at the same time had the public declaration of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to the effect that trade was never more flourishing. But your greatest objection to the Corn-law is, that it has a tendency to encourage speculation. You tell us, among other things, that last year there was a rise in price just before the harvest, and that the consequence was, a large importation of foreign corn, which was met by the abundant crop, and consequently proved unremunerative to its holders. Now, I think it is hardly fair to try the existing Corn-law with reference to the circumstances of the last year. What were the circumstances of the last year? Certainly in the spring of last year large speculations took place in the importation of foreign corn, and these speculations were entered into on the assumption that there would be an unfavourable and a defective harvest. There never was a period when greater exertion was made than in the spring of last year to bring in large quantities of corn, on account of the expectation that prevailed that there would be a failure of the harvest. That conviction remained in full force up to a very late period of the year, and, the harvest turning out favourable, an occurrence so widely different from that which was expected, naturally caused losses which are not to be traced to the Corn-law. You are not testing the law fairly, therefore, if you try it by the circumstances of last year. But, nevertheless, let us see what the law really did last year. It came into operation on the 28th of April. At the 13s. duty which then, or shortly after occurred, 26,000 quarters of wheat were imported. At the 12s. duty, the amount imported during the two weeks ending the 13th and 20th of May, was 50,000 quarters; and in the weeks ending the 18th and 25th of June, when the duty was 9s. and 10s., not less than 76,000 quarters were brought in. This shows that the law did not operate badly. But the truth is, that both speculations were entered into, and the natural operation interfered with, in consequence of certain motions made and speeches delivered within these walls. Some hon. members were, up to the latest moment, loud in their predictions of a deficient harvest, and their language was very influential in inducing corn-merchants to enter into speculation, and the holders of corn to retain their purchases in expectation of a further rise. It was so late as the 7th of July, that the hon. member for Aberdeen submitted a motion to this House to give a power to the Queen in council to remit the duties on corn during the recess. What would the speculator in corn naturally do when he saw motions of that kind made, and read such speeches (which, of course, operated as an encouragement), but hold back his corn? What said the noble lord the member for Tiverton, a person of high distinction in this House, and who held a cabinet office under the late administration? On the 11th of July, at the very time when all those speculations were going forward, the noble lord said in this House: "I venture to predict, that if parliament does not meet before November the government will have to let out the bonded corn."

This was the confident prediction of the noble lord; I acquit the noble lord of all improper motives. He was, I am sure, expressing a *bona fide* opinion, and never thought of interfering with the operation of the law; he believed that the harvest would prove defective—that another 2,500,000 quarters of corn must be imported from the Continent, at whatever price; but when the speculators heard a person in the situation of the noble lord make that declaration, they would naturally say—and the greater their confidence in the noble lord the more inclined they would be to say—"We will keep back our corn, for there is every prospect of a rise in the price;" and I must say, that if the agricultural interest have suffered from the sudden influx, at a critical period, of large quantities of corn, they have to thank the noble lord and his predictions for that influx of corn. But the noble lord was not the only prophet of evil. There was another noble lord—I mean the member for Sunderland. That noble lord, with the high sanction of his name, after the law passed, at a time when persons were pouring in corn to the extent of forty and fifty thousand quarters, at a duty of 10s. and 12s., gave notice of a motion to release all corn in bond at a fixed duty of 6s. a quarter until the month of March, 1843. Corn, then, was brought into this country under the belief that the harvest would be a bad one, and at the same time there were three gentlemen in this House—supposed to speak with the

best authority and most complete information on the subject—declaring, that if the speculators kept back their corn they would be sure to have a much lower duty, and giving notice of motions which, if they had been carried, would have effected that object. Is it not, then, fair to suppose that the natural operation of the new law was, to some extent, defeated by predictions of this kind; that that law has not had a fair trial, and is not to be judged by the circumstances of last year? But to go to another point. I am taking the objections to the measure *seriatim*. I know that it has been a favourite objection to the sliding-scale, that it has had the effect of preventing the employment of British shipping in the carrying of foreign corn, and of giving employment to foreign ships. It is said, that the duty on corn, varying inversely with the price when the duty is low, a sudden demand for foreign corn arises, which is shipped at foreign ports, and that few British ships are employed in carrying it. I know that this has been repeatedly urged upon the shipping interest for the purpose of inducing them to join in demanding a fixed duty in preference to a varying duty, which it was represented gave the advantage of the carrying trade to foreign ships. Now, what are the facts? I hold in my hand a return of the number of ships entered inwards with corn. In 1842, there were 4,203 corn-laden ships entered in the ports of England. Of these 2,346, or considerably more than one-half, were British ships. In 1841, the corn-laden ships entered were in number 4,705; but of these only 1,887, or considerably less than one-half, were British. So far, therefore, as we can form a judgment, the present law does not operate to discourage the employment of British ships. Next, looking to the question of steadiness of price, I can see no impeachment of the new law on that score. Of course the price being 64s., the object was to reduce it, and immediately after the harvest a fall ensued; but on the whole, looking at prices since the harvest, I own I cannot see that any formidable objection is to be made to the law on that ground. Looking, then, at the objections to the law—looking at the frauds which have been checked—looking at the export of bullion which the hon. member for Wolverhampton himself allowed to have ceased. [Mr. C. Villiers: “I said it ceased when the importation was regular.”] The hon. member, in making that admission, spoke of last year—looking at the increased employment of British shipping—and looking at the state of prices which certainly have been steady, and not immoderately low—looking, I say, at these things, I do think that I am entitled to declare the present Corn-law to be an improvement on its precursor, and that it has worked any thing but injuriously for the commerce of the country. Upon these grounds, I see no reason for retracting the favourable opinion which I entertained and expressed of the present law. I think that frequent alterations in laws of this kind are in themselves to be deprecated. I think, also, that the existing law, offered as a compromise, was a fair adjustment of the question. I believe that there was as willing and as cordial an assent given to it by the agricultural interest as could have been anticipated. I think they gave that assent upon the assumption and in the expectation, that the law would not be again altered without good and sufficient reason. I do not mean to say that I could set up that as a ready argument against alteration of the law, if alteration were shown to be desirable; but, certainly, unless solid and sufficient reason for further alteration be shown, I think that that assent ought to prevail and hold good. Upon the subject of the Canadian Corn-bill, I do not now mean to enter; but I can state with truth, that the question of the admission of Canada corn was part of the original arrangement. It is no new measure, but one brought forward in execution of a promise given to Canada at the time this subject was under consideration, and which we feel it incumbent on us to fulfil. We know that the re-agitation of this question must expose us to difficulty, and must have a tendency still more to alienate the confidence of many who have supported us; but we consider that we have given an engagement to the people of Canada which it is our duty to fulfil—that we have held out to them expectations which it is our duty to realise. I hope, in the course of what I have addressed to the House, I have answered satisfactorily the question put to me by the noble lord. As I said before, we proposed the present measure of the Corn-laws, not with any secret reservation or secret intention of effecting another alteration; I contemplate no such alteration. My opinion is, that there has not been sufficient time allowed for trying the effect of the present law; but that, so far as a trial has been given to it, the effect favourably confirms the anticipations I formed

respecting it. The noble lord, the member for Sunderland, has referred to my conduct on the Roman Catholic question, and stated that I should be prepared to make farther concessions. The noble lord also spoke of my being desirous to please both parties; but be that as it may, if I have had such an object in view, I am afraid that I have failed in accomplishing it. Persons in my situation—in the situation of her Majesty's government—in endeavouring to steer a middle course, not adhering to one extreme or another, may expose themselves to that imputation. But that course was not taken with any other view than that of doing what we considered to be best for the public interests. I can solemnly assure the House that, in the course which we have taken—risking, as we did last year, the confidence and the friendship of many of our supporters—risking, I may say, the fate of the government—that course was dictated with reference to what was best and most advisable for the public interests. And when I say that the same regard for the public interests shall influence me and her Majesty's government, with respect to this important concern, I hope the House will believe that I do not make that declaration for the purpose of providing a refuge for myself and my colleagues against any political storms to which we may be exposed, but because I think it most suited to the magnitude of those interests and concerns which are placed in the hands of the responsible advisers of the Crown.

An animated conversation then ensued, and, several motions and counter-motions having been put and negatived, the House adjourned.

## ARMS (IRELAND) BILL.

MAY 31, 1843.

Lord Elliot proposed the second reading of this bill. A very lengthened discussion ensued, extending over three nights, towards the close of which—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said—I do not consider, at this hour of the night, in the absence of many members of the late government, though I do not refer to the fact as any matter of blame, for I think the noble lord the member for London intimated his intention of giving his support to the bill—I do not, I say, consider it desirable at this hour, and remembering the nature of the question before us, to enter, in the absence of many whom I should desire to be present, into a general vindication of the conduct of the Irish government. When the proper time arrives, I shall be perfectly ready to vindicate the acts of the government in Ireland, and of the government in this country in connection with it. I shall be prepared to show, that I have redeemed every pledge which I have given with respect to the government of Ireland, and that the government here and the Irish government have attempted to administer affairs in that spirit of moderation, impartiality, and forbearance, with which I think the affairs of Ireland ought to be conducted. And I cannot accept the testimony which, with not a very laudable industry, the hon. baronet collected from every newspaper, as conclusive evidence of our failure in those attempts. Sir, before gentlemen not immediately versed in Irish matters, and not having any local experience in that country, draw an unfavourable conclusion with respect to the conduct of our government, I entreat them always to bear in mind the testimony, so honourable to himself, which we have just heard from the hon. gentleman opposite (Sir D. Roche). The chief charge alleged against us is, that we have appointed to the judicial office, two gentlemen of high professional distinction—Mr. Justice Jackson and Mr. Justice Leffroy. The hon. gentleman, hearing their judicial conduct attacked, he, a Roman Catholic—[Cries of "No."]—well, if not a Roman Catholic, and I beg the hon. member's pardon for the error, a gentleman decidedly friendly to Catholic claims—of strong political and party opinions—a gentleman connected with the liberal party in Ireland, cannot remain silent when he hears an imputation on those learned judges which he knows to be unjust; and he states therefore, from his personal experience of the conduct of one of those judges, and from his general knowledge of the conduct of the other, that the discharge of their official duties is free from all blame. He says, if there is any one respect in which they have failed, it is in too great humanity in the exercise of their duty. I say, then, remember the testimony so borne—a testimony so creditable to himself, and of such weight, from the disinterested character of the witness from whom it proceeds, before



you place implicit confidence in the other charges against the Irish government; remember, I say, the refutation of the charges brought against them as to their judicial appointments. Sir, I wonder that hon. gentlemen do not exercise a little of that tolerance and liberality of which they profess themselves the champions. In speaking of the judges, and the performance of their judicial duties, they do not refer to these acts; they do not regard their professional eminence; they never refer to their professional claims, or ask whether they have entitled themselves to public approbation for the discharge of their judicial duties; but they ransack speeches made at a former period in a political character, and on some passages of those speeches hon. gentlemen condemn our appointments. If I had pursued the same course with regard to Sir Michael O'Loughlen, for instance, or with regard to the other Attorney-general for Ireland, elevated to the bench under the late administration, whose professional eminence, I admit, fully entitled them to the honour conferred on them, what would have been thought of me if I had said, "True, his professional rank supplies a claim to distinction; true, his judicial conduct has been above exception; but he held strong political opinions on some particular measures, and he is not therefore entitled to reap the reward of his professional merits." If I had taken such a course as that, in what light should I have been regarded by the House and the country. But, Sir, to confine myself to the particular measure before the House, I must say the hon. gentleman, the member for Waterford, has not answered the question put to so many others who have denounced this bill—"If you entertain the opinion which you now profess—if you believe this bill to be an insult to Ireland—if you believe the bill of rights conceded a privilege which this bill infringes, and infringes unjustly—if you think that, independently of the bill of rights, the common law of Ireland, as well as that of England, gave the subject this right, which he ought to continue to possess—if these are your opinions in 1843, why did you abandon your parliamentary duty, and give your sanction to a similar bill in 1841?" You say we found Ireland tranquil; you say that outrage was suppressed. there was no necessity for vigorous measures; and yet you, the representatives of Ireland, considering this as an insult offered to Ireland, did in the year 1841, when there was no necessity for vigorous measures—out of complaisance to the then government, consent to take this infraction of the common-law right of the subject, and without inquiry to vote in favour of it. And what says the hon. gentleman, one of the chief opponents of the present measure (Mr. O'Brien)? Why, that if we had not done him the favour of explaining the provisions of the former law, he should not have known what they were. He, a legislator, passes laws without knowing their provisions, and, as a magistrate, executes the laws without knowing what they enact! Sir, we thought it not right that we should re-enact the old law with a few continuing lines—that law which this worthy legislator and magistrate passed and executed, without knowing any thing of its provisions until we called his attention to them. And is that your zeal for the liberties of Ireland? I think better of you than you would lead me to entertain from this debate. I do believe you supported the bill in 1841, because you thought the peculiarity of the circumstances of Ireland justified a bill of that sort: that you did not think you were offering an insult to, or unjustly infringing on, the liberties of the people, by passing this act; but that, having an intimate knowledge of the circumstances at the time, and knowing the peculiar outrages and class of crimes against which it was directed, namely, the assassination of the peaceable and unoffending subjects of the Queen, you thought yourselves justified in making an exception to the general principle of the law, and in taking security for the life and property of those entitled to ask for security from the legislature under which they live. It is well to talk of general principles; but bear in mind the position of a man with a family liable to be attacked by assassins. If you can give him security against these, it is your bounden duty to do so. You can do nothing more likely to retard improvement than to banish from their residences those who are afraid of their lives. Read a description of any one of the murders recently committed, beginning with that of Lord Norbury, and coming to the last case of Mr. Gatchell, who consoled himself with the reflection,—"I took what security I could against assassination, but it was impossible to watch every bush that lay along my road."

Take the details of such cases into your consideration, and then say whether you

can refuse your assent to this measure. And when did we propose this act? Not now with reference to the present state of excitement. You know perfectly well that we gave notice, at an early period of the session, of this act, with reference to a totally different state of things, and intended for a different purpose—you know that there is no fair analogy between the extent of general crime in England and in Ireland; and that the question is, life not being secure, whether, on account of the possession of fire-arms, murder be not committed with greater facility, and the chance of escape increased, and whether it be not desirable, in order to facilitate the detection of the assassin, that there should be some regulation for the registration of arms. If the hon. baronet who just addressed the House had, instead of referring to scraps of newspapers, considered the provisions of the bill, he would not have fallen into the mistakes which he has committed. The hon. baronet said, that under this bill the Protestant yeomanry will be protected, whilst Roman Catholics will be prevented from having arms. The hon. baronet said he knew of districts in which the bill would have a tendency to facilitate the possession of arms by Protestants. I think I can satisfy the House, that the government have no desire to show favour to one class of her Majesty's subjects at the expense of another. By the existing law on the statute book, and in actual operation, an exception is made in favour of persons serving in yeomanry corps; they are exempt from the liability to register their arms. By the bill now before the House, the members of yeomanry corps are placed on the same footing as all other persons, and the exemption they now possess will no longer be extended to them [Sir H. W. Barron: There are no yeomanry corps now on service in Ireland]. I say that at present the members of yeomanry corps are not compelled to register their arms, and by our bill we compel them hereafter to register their arms. At any rate, that provision shows the spirit in which this bill is framed. The speech made on the night before last by the right hon. and learned member for Dungarvon, was characterised, as is usually the case with all the speeches made by that gentleman, by this peculiarity, that it contained a vindication of the measure which he so strenuously opposed. It was justly observed by my right hon. friend (Sir James Graham), that in the first part of his address, the right hon. and learned gentleman spoke with the calmness of a witness. In that speech, the right hon. gentleman, once the member for the county of Tipperary, one of the principal scenes of outrage in Ireland, and now, I believe, a resident, certainly a proprietor, in that county, knowing its local circumstances, acquainted with the disposition to outrage which prevails among the people, and aware of the peculiar character of the crimes by which some parts of that county had been disgraced,—the right hon. gentleman gave a picture of the state of Tipperary, which establishes that distinction between the circumstances of England and of Ireland, which justify the House in prolonging the duration of the measure now before them. I have heard nothing in the details of crime—I have seen nothing in the reports of police-offices—I have heard no opinions of magistrates on the subject, which have made half so strong an impression on my mind as the few sentences delivered in the character of a witness by the right hon. member. He said that the state of that country was such, that he thought crime could not be effectually repressed unless the landed proprietors came forward to serve upon the petty juries; and he advised that, as it was found difficult to induce persons to undertake the voluntary performance of such important functions, the landed proprietors should supersede the class of ordinary petty jurors, being compelled to serve under a fine of £500 or £600. That is to say, the principle of the law being "*Judicium parium et lex terræ*;" that jurors shall, under ordinary circumstances, be selected from persons of the same class and position as the individual whom they are to try. "Such" (says the right hon. gentleman) "is the state of this district, with which I am perfectly acquainted, that on a fine of £500 or £600, I would compel the gentry and the landed proprietors to come forward and perform the functions of petty jurors."

Why, what is the effect of such a course? The outrages being of an agrarian character, the disputes relating to the possession of land—the question at issue being between the tenants and the landed proprietors—the remedy proposed by the right hon. gentleman would enable the landed proprietors to sit as judges in cases between their tenants and themselves. What must be the state of this district when the right hon. gentleman, a privy-councillor, an eminent lawyer, considers it necessary,

under a penalty of £500 or £600, to require the landed proprietors to perform such duties? "Then" (says the right hon. gentleman) "it is necessary, for the purpose of facilitating the detection of crime, that you should give full security to the witnesses."

These engagements to provide for the witnesses, unless entered with the utmost caution, partake of the character of an inducement to give evidence. The right hon. gentleman added, "I know a case in which a humble neighbour of mine prosecuted persons charged with murder to conviction; I applied to the government, I claimed their interference, and by the exercise of my legitimate influence I induced the government to provide for the expatriation of that man, and of his family, and for their continued maintenance in the colony to which they were sent." "And" (said the right hon. gentleman) "apply the same principle; invite witnesses to come forward; guarantee to them their removal to a distant land, and on their arrival there, subsistence for themselves and their families."

Sir, there are many things which whig and liberal lawyers will say, which, were they uttered by conservative politicians, would excite suspicion, and meet with grave condemnation. There are some who, when a whig government administered the affairs of this country, could reconcile it to themselves to give an unanimous vote for the second reading of this bill, but who, when the same measure is proposed by us, denounce it as an outrage and an insult to Ireland. I am sure the right hon. gentleman, in applying his principle, would, as far as possible, guard it against the possibility of abuse. He would, I am convinced, as far as possible, take care that this promise to provide comfortable appointments and subsistence in distant colonies, should not degenerate into an encouragement of false testimony. I am convinced that, if the right hon. gentleman's will could prevail, none but the honest witness—the witness determined to declare the truth—would be selected by him for this mark of favour—favour, at least, as compared with the consequences of continued residence in his own country. But, speaking not of honest and truth-telling witnesses, what is the state of a country as to the commission of crime, and as to the administration of justice, when he who is disposed to bring the assassin to punishment is obliged to flee his native country, and to seek refuge for himself and his family in a distant land? "And his family!" says the right hon. gentleman very significantly. Oh no! it will not be sufficient to remove the witness, it will not be sufficient to provide the man with employment; you must remove his innocent wife and children with him, or they will be the victims of the assassin's confederates. It is an easy matter to talk lightly of this way of providing for witnesses; but I ask you to consider what is the attachment of a peasant to his native land. You take this unoffending man—this man disposed to co-operate with you in the execution of the law, in furthering the ends of justice; you bring him to the witness-box; you ask for his testimony against an assassin. Compare the number of committals with the number of convictions, and is it improbable that the trial may result in the acquittal of the prisoner? He is restored to his family; he retires triumphantly from the dock in full possession of his liberty, laughing at the administration of justice. What, then, is to become of the honest man who gave unavailing testimony? He is not to remain in the country. The farm that he has cultivated he is to relinquish, and you think it will be a compensation to him, perhaps advanced in life, to offer him an asylum in Canada or some other colony! That is the scheme of the right hon. gentleman, and he says, too, he would apply the same laws to England and to Ireland. But I say, cannot we find better means of giving security to that witness, by facilitating the registration of fire-arms and preventing the improper use of them, than by admitting him to give his evidence on the expectation of our afterwards facilitating his expatriation to one of the colonies? I must repeat, that the picture of the state of society in Ireland which was drawn by the right hon. gentleman, coming as it did from such unquestionable authority, constitutes, in my opinion, a sufficient reason in itself for passing a law to provide greater security for life in that country. With respect to the character of this bill, I have heard in the course of this debate much declamation against unconstitutional bills; but I must say, that I have heard more unconstitutional doctrine from hon. members opposite than I ever before heard in the course of one session. When I heard an hon. and learned gentleman, in the midst of those expressions of respect which he was pleased to apply to myself,

say that this detestable bill, if it had been proposed by Lord Morpeth, should have had his assent, I must confess my surprise. [Mr. C. Buller: I consider the bill a matter of indifference.] Then, according to the hon. and learned gentleman, this bill is a matter of such entire indifference, that his vote for or against it would be given according to the politics of the Irish secretary who might propose it; but I cannot accept that compliment to the bill. I consider it a measure of grave importance. It is with deep regret that I propose such a bill. I am sorry to maintain a distinction between England and Ireland in this respect. I do think that the obligation to register fire-arms, and the trouble you give, and the prohibition to bear arms,—all this I do think a matter of great regret, which nothing but necessity can justify; but that necessity would be equally cogent whether the bill was brought in by a liberal or a conservative Irish secretary. It rests for its vindication, not on political considerations, but it rests for its vindication on necessity—the necessity of taking security for life in a country where outrages of a peculiar description prevail. I cannot, therefore, admit that the bill is a matter of indifference. The question, then, for the House to consider is, whether, after the admission of the Irish members so late ago as 1841, that such a bill was necessary for Ireland, the whole difference being a change in the government, the House will take upon itself the responsibility by their vote of to-night of putting a stop to any measure for the registration of fire-arms in Ireland? Particular parts of the bill will be open to discussion hereafter; the question for to-night is, whether, with respect to a measure which has been felt to be necessary by successive administrations, which has not been brought forward in any spirit of insult, but in reliance upon the opinion of the magistrates, and the reports of those who are charged with the preservation of the public peace, who have stated that they consider such a measure necessary,—whether you, unacquainted as you are with the local circumstances of Ireland, will undertake the responsibility, by negating the second reading, of putting a stop to the system of registering arms in Ireland? As I said before, the measure was brought on at a period of the session which was too early to allow of its having been framed with reference to the present state of Ireland; in fact (as my noble friend behind me (Lord Eliot) states, and, I am sure, no hon. gentleman will desire to question his assertion, the bill was prepared last year, and therefore, I again repeat, was not brought forward with reference to the agitation that is now going on in Ireland. With reference to the other subjects, which, though not properly subjects of the debate of to-night, have, nevertheless, not unnaturally been brought on in the course of it, I shall be perfectly ready to go into them on other occasions. At present, I shall only say, on the part of the government, perfectly prepared as I am to vindicate, I trust successfully, the course which the government has thought it right to pursue—determined as we are to exercise every legitimate and constitutional power which we possess, for the purpose of contending against the accomplishment of those acts which the unanimous opinion of every member of this House, from England and Scotland, and of a great number of members from Ireland, declare to be equivalent to a dismemberment of the empire, and a separation of Ireland from the sister country—but postponing for the present the discussion of that question, and the consideration of other measures we have adopted, I ask the House, which will have the opportunity at a future time of considering the clauses of the present bill in detail—I ask the House not to take upon itself the responsibility of declaring by its vote that, with respect to Ireland, there shall be no special condition imposed as to the registration and the use of arms.

Bill read a second time, and ordered to be committed.

## SUGAR DUTIES.

JUNE 22, 1843.

The House in Committee on the Sugar Duties Bill. On clause 1 being read,—“That the duties imposed by 6th and 7th William IV., chap. 26th, and 3rd and 4th Victoria, chap. 17, be continued till July 5, 1844,”—Mr. Hawes proposed, by way of amendment, to add the following words:—“Except so far as regards the duties

on foreign brown Muscovado sugar, not being refined, which shall be hereafter charged at the rate of 34s. the cwt."

SIR ROBERT PEEL: The right hon gentleman who has just sat down (Mr. Labouchere), expressed a hope that some explanation would be given by her Majesty's government as to the course of negotiations on this subject, past or future—but the right hon. gentleman must be aware, that great embarrassment might result to the public service if any member of her Majesty's government entered into details with respect to matters of this nature. I may say, generally, that her Majesty's government have, within the last year, submitted propositions to the government of Brazil for the purpose of placing our commercial relations with that country, which will terminate in November, 1844, upon a basis which appears to her Majesty's government more satisfactory than that which at present exists. These propositions, so made by her Majesty's government to the government of Brazil, had reference to the article of sugar. We proposed to the government of Brazil to treat for the freer admission of Brazilian sugar into the markets of this country, on the condition that the government of Brazil should adopt some measures for the purpose of ameliorating the condition of the slave population of that empire, and leading, not immediately, but gradually and ultimately, to the extinction of slavery in its dominions. It was unnecessary to enter into any discussion with the government of Brazil upon that basis, because the government of Brazil intimated to her Majesty's government, in the first instance, that they would not consent to treat upon any other basis than that contended for by the hon. member for Dumfries—namely, that the agricultural produce of Brazil should be admitted into this country, not only upon as favourable a footing as that on which the produce of any foreign country was admitted, but upon the same footing as that on which we admitted the produce of our own colonies. Subsequently, a modification of that proposal was submitted, permitting an advantage of 10 per cent to the produce of our colonies; but that was understood to be the *ultimatum* of the Brazilian government, and the negotiation with that government then terminated. Our treaty with the government of Brazil expires, as I have before stated, in November, 1844. The hon. member for Dumfries has frequently said, "If you object to make a treaty with Brazil, why don't you treat for the admission of Java sugar into this country, or for the admission of sugar produced in the islands of the Indian Archipelago or in China into our markets? These are sources from which you may admit the competition of foreign sugar, free from the objection that that sugar is the produce of slave-labour."

The hon. gentleman says, "Here you may obtain sugar the produce of free labour; show a disposition to break up the West-India monopoly; and remove your prohibitive duties in favour of sugar which is produced by free-labour."

But the answer to the hon. gentleman, at present at least, is this, that by our treaties with Brazil and other countries producing sugar by slave-labour, we are not at liberty, during the existence of those treaties, to permit the importation into this country of sugar, the produce of free-labour. You cannot permit the introduction of China or Java sugar into this country, while your present treaty with Brazil continues in force; because that treaty gives to Brazil the right of insisting upon the admission of its sugar, though it may be the produce of slave-labour, to the exclusion of other sugar, although it may be the produce of free-labour. There is no stipulation in the treaty, I presume, that the conditions must be the same. You are not at liberty, I apprehend, to say to Brazil, it is true we admit Java sugar, but it is the produce of free-labour; yours is the produce of slave-labour. Brazil, I apprehend, has under the existing treaty a right to call upon us to admit her sugar on the most favourable footing. This is an answer to the argument of the hon. member for Dumfries as to the introduction of Java sugar. Well, then, Sir, I must still contend, notwithstanding that I admit, as I have before admitted, the benefits to be derived from a supply of cheap sugar, that in the existing feeling of the people of Brazil with respect to the slave-trade, it cannot be expected that this country, after our sacrifices for the abolition of the slave-trade and of slavery, and after the professions we have made in the face of the world, could admit, without fixing a stain on the character of the nation, Brazilian sugar to the British market, unless we obtained at the same time further concessions from them in favour of the suppression of the slave-trade. Sir, I am much afraid that the history of the slave-trade

in Brazil will be found to reflect any thing but honour on that country, any thing but honour on their legislation, any thing but honour on their executive. Sir, when some time ago it became necessary to remove our fleet, which was stationed on the Brazilian coasts for the prevention of the slave-trade, to protect British interests in the river Plate, the Brazilians took advantage of its absence, and the slave-trade immediately rose again with a vigour never before known. I state this with confidence, for I have here a list of the ships that introduced slaves, with accounts of the artifices that were made use of, and the manner in which the slaves were conveyed. Representations, I need not say, were made by our minister to the Brazilian authorities, and the most earnest remonstrances addressed to them. But look at the extent of Brazil, and the vast tracts of virgin land in that country fit for the cultivation of sugar. Public feeling there (it is impossible to deny it) is in favour of the free admission of slaves, for the purpose of cultivating those tracts and raising sugar on them; and therefore, although, as the right hon. gentleman says—and the argument has some plausibility—we encourage slave-labour and the slave-trade by becoming the carriers of their produce in the way we do at present, and therefore we cannot consistently refuse to take their sugar; yet depend upon it, if you open the British market to their sugar, although there is some analogy to our present proceedings, the practical consequence would be, that you would give an immediate stimulus to the slave-trade. You would discourage the growth of that spirit which you have been fostering for years; you would be taking a different course; you would give rise to new exertions on the part of the slave-traders. There cannot be a doubt, I apprehend, that such would be the practical result of opening the British market to Brazilian sugar. It has been said by some hon. gentlemen that her Majesty's ministers are afraid to deal with monopoly, that we are afraid to come into collision with the West-India interest. Now, if we were to put aside considerations of justice, and looked only for popularity and support in this House, I do believe that the very best thing we could do would be to sacrifice the West-Indian interest. [An hon. member, "No."] The hon. member only heard the last part of my sentence, that the very best thing we could do would be to sacrifice the West-Indian interest. What I did say was, that if the government, casting aside other considerations, were to look only for parliamentary support, if they disregarded considerations of justice and sought only popularity, then their best course would be to admit to the British market the produce of Brazil and Cuba. That was what I said; but then it is said we have purchased the right by the grant of £20,000,000 of compensation money, of dealing as we like with the West-Indian proprietors. Now, if I take an individual proprietor, and say I purchased your slaves, and I have a right to deal with you as may appear expedient—if I take the case of a single proprietor, perhaps in strict justice I might have a right to say so. But still, I very much doubt whether on the whole a compensation in full has been given him for so great a change as has taken place. I have made anxious inquiries into this question; and in order to test the truth, instead of a vague statement, I asked for an account of the estate of an individual. On an average of years, previous to the commencement of the apprenticeship system, that estate was yielding about £10,000 a-year. During the apprenticeship system the average was about £6,400 a-year. But I wished to ascertain what were the returns now of payments made and profits received, and this is the account, the accuracy of which I have every reason to confide in. From the 15th January to the 31st of December, 1840, the payments for the wages of labour, the island taxes, the repairs of machinery and other things, amounted to £10,681; the receipts for the same period were £7,028. This was in 1840. For the same period in 1841, the payments were £9,889, the receipts £7,042. In the last year, when, as it was said, a sufficient interval—or, as the right hon. gentleman called it, breathing-time—had been given, when the experiment had been tried, what were the results? From the 1st of January to the 31st of December, last year, the payments were £9,795, the receipts £7,230. So that for the last three years, an estate from which the average returns were £10,000 a-year, averaged a net loss on the three crops of £3,081. [Mr. Hawes: The estate belongs to a resident proprietor]. No, the proprietor is not resident; and I admit that his being resident might possibly make a difference; but I was comparing the present with the former produce of the estate. Probably in former years also the residence of the proprietor would have increased the profits.

I was only showing, and I think conclusively, from this account, that though, perhaps, more than £10,000 or £14,000 might have been received in such a case from the slave compensation fund, still, noble as the gift was as respects us, it cannot be considered that the proprietor has received complete compensation for the change which has arisen from the abolition of slavery. However, I am not complaining of that abolition, or of the amount of the sum received; I am only dealing with the argument that we have paid you the £20,000,000, and therefore have a right to deal with you as we like. I say again, that if I take the case of an individual proprietor, it may be that he has in strict justice no reason to complain; but when I come to legislate on such a subject, I must look at the actual condition of the colonies and the nature of the connection which exists between them and the mother country. [An hon. member: "Divide, divide."] I am always ready to accede to the wishes of the House, and the more so on the present occasion; the subject being one which has so frequently been discussed, nothing new can be said upon it. I rose with pain, and should not have done so were it not that hon. gentlemen opposite taunted government with being silent. I had been asked what had been done with respect to the negotiations with Brazil? I have stated as distinctly as I can the course which has been pursued, and I now hope that the House will consent to the proposition of the government.

The committee divided on the question, "That the words moved by Mr. Hawes be added:" Ayes, 122; Noes, 203; Majority, 81.

The different clauses having been gone through, the House resumed.

## POSTAGE REFORM—MR. R. HILL.

JUNE 27, 1843.

Sir Thomas Wilde having moved for a select committee to inquire into the progress which had been made in carrying into effect the recommendations of Mr. Hill for post-office improvement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer moved, as an amendment, "That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the measures adopted for the general introduction of the system of penny postage, and for facilitating the conveyance of letters throughout the country."

SIR ROBERT PEEL felt, with his right hon. colleague, conscious that the government had done every thing in their power to give a full and fair trial to Mr. Hill's plan. It would have been a great dereliction of public duty, if any doubt they might have entertained at a former period, had led them to take any other course upon acceding to office than the course they had taken with regard to Mr. Hill, that, namely, of facilitating his plan in every possible way. He had never felt a doubt as to the great social advantages of lowering the duty on letters; the only doubt was as to its financial effect: in all other respects the result of any inquiry would show, that whatever might have been the loss to the revenue, much advantage had been derived in what concerned the encouragement of industry, and the promotion of communication between the humbler classes of the community. He had already, elsewhere, given his full testimony to the ability and disinterestedness of Mr. Hill, and he willingly repeated that testimony now. The right hon. gentleman had used the expression "dismissed" in reference to the government's having dispensed with the services of Mr. Hill. He did not think that a proper term to be used. He thought, as his right hon. friend thought, that those who originated the penny postage always considered Mr. Hill's appointment a temporary one—that they considered that for a certain period, in the first instance two years, it was desirable that Mr. Hill should lend his assistance to the Treasury in carrying out his plan. They afterwards extended the two years to three; but he certainly always had the impression that at the end of the third year, by which time the plan would be satisfactorily in operation, it was their expressed intention and intimation, that Mr. Hill's services were to be dispensed with. It was, therefore, no dissatisfaction with Mr. Hill's conduct, no indifference to his services, that led him and his right hon. friend to take the course they had taken; they took the course which, as they clearly un-

derstood, had been contemplated by their predecessors in office, and which—a point of still greater importance—they considered most consistent with the public interest. He differed from the right hon. gentleman opposite as to the course which ought to have been pursued. It appeared to him, that had it been deemed necessary to retain Mr. Hill's services, and had it been conceived that the post-office authorities were hostile to the plan, prejudiced against its principles and its details, and indisposed to lend themselves with zeal and cordiality to carrying it out, the plan should have been, not to retain Mr. Hill in control over the post-office (yet unconnected with it), but to have at once made him secretary of the post-office. That department would thus have been no longer in a position continually to obstruct—as the complaint was—the due execution of the plan; but Mr. Hill himself, the person so deeply anxious for the success of the scheme, would have the immediate control of it. The other plan, of keeping Mr. Hill on from year to year, uncertain of the tenure of his office, was, in every point of view, most inconsistent with the public interest. It was due to the character of the gentleman at the head of the post-office, of the men whom the former government had placed there on account of their knowledge and intelligence—it was due to the secretary of the post-office to say, that it was not possible he could have thrown any obstruction in Mr. Hill's way, or that he had not cordially co-operated with him to ensure the success of his plan. Colonel Maberly, however, when he was examined, was bound to explain his opinion, and express any doubts he might entertain of the success of Mr. Hill's plan. But it was doing Colonel Maberly a great injustice to suppose, that any such circumstance could interfere with the strict performance of his public duty, or to believe, whatever might be the nature of his opinions, that he had not exerted himself to the utmost of his power to promote the success of Mr. Hill's plan, though he had before expressed doubts of its success. Colonel Maberly was a gentleman who had sat in that House, and during the time he was in parliament had recommended himself to general esteem by his intelligence; and he certainly was not a man so imbued with departmental prejudices, that he should lend himself to any unworthy scheme, or fail to co-operate with Mr. Hill in order to ensure the success of his great experiment. Again, with respect to Lord Lowther, it was hardly necessary for him, after the testimony of the hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Wallace), whose political predilections rendered his judgment on this point unsuspected—after that hon. gentleman's praise of the manner in which Lord Lowther executed the office of postmaster-general, he felt it was not necessary for him to say one word respecting the qualifications of Lord Lowther. He was bound to say, considering his position and the high situation which Lord Lowther had filled, that he thought the noble lord had made a great sacrifice in accepting the office. On his own appointment to office he knew no other person of great talents, great intelligence, and great industry, who was so well calculated, if placed at the head of the post-office, and to answer for the fair trial of the experiment, as Lord Lowther. He had therefore asked the noble lord to accept the office; and he was sure that, so far from that appointment being intended to be an obstruction to the success of Mr. Rowland Hill's plan, that nothing was more calculated to ensure its success, and that he could not do a greater service to Mr. Rowland Hill's scheme than to appoint Lord Lowther to the office of postmaster-general. He differed from the hon. gentleman opposite, in thinking that a postmaster-general, of the intelligence and independence of mind of Lord Lowther, and who would not use the influence of his office improperly, was better to be at the head of the system than any number of commissioners. That Lord Lowther was ready to give his support to the system, he took all the assurance possible. He had examined the votes of Lord Lowther in the committee to inquire into Mr. Rowland Hill's plan, and he had found that the noble lord had voted for all Mr. Warburton's resolutions. He voted for the resolution that there should be an uniform rate of postage, which embodied the great principles of Mr. Hill's system. Lord Lowther had approved of the adoption of the plan, and was a decided friend to Mr. Hill's system. With respect to the committee to which his right hon. friend had assented, he thought the House was fairly entitled now to inquire, considering the time which had elapsed, into the working of the system. He should not enter into details, which had been fully explained by his right hon. friend, the right hon. gentleman opposite, and the hon. and learned gentleman who introduced the motion.



He hoped the committee would apply itself to the objects stated in the amendment of his right hon. friend, and consider what had been adopted, and its effects, and not attempt to subject to the supervision of parliament the whole of the business of the post-office, which would only make the committee, were it to do so, fail in its inquiries. It was generally supposed that the arrangements of the post-office were very simple; but in fact they were very complicated, adapted to the varying circumstances of different parts of the country, and none but those who saw the whole could form a fair judgment of the system. If the committee should think of supervising the treasury and the post-office, the public would derive no advantage from its labours. It was right that it should contemplate the general results of the new scheme, and inquire fully into its effects, both on the country and on the revenue; but it would not be right for the committee to supervise the public offices, which could only occupy the time of the committee with mere details, and lead to no satisfactory results. If the treasury and the post-office were to be subjected to the supervision of the committee, the public business would be paralysed. Separately, then, from inquiring into the departments of the government with which the system had no concern, he thought that government would not be justified in now refusing to allow a full inquiry into the progress and success of the great experiment. He considered it proper, as he had said before, to abstain from entering into details; but the House was entitled to know that a fair trial had been given to Mr. Hill's plan, to ascertain the extent of its social advantages, and its effect on the revenue of the country. While such should be the course of the House of Commons, he would assure them, that while he continued in office he would lend all his weight, influence, and authority, to ensure full justice to the new system.

The motion, as amended, agreed to.

## STATE OF IRELAND.

JULY 11, 1843.

In the fourth night's debate on Mr. W. Smith O'Brien's motion—"That the House resolve itself into a Committee, to take into consideration the causes of the discontent at present existing in Ireland," &c.

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows:—Sir, in considering the character of the motion which is now under discussion, and in noticing some of the topics which have been introduced in the course of that discussion, I shall commence by observing that I entertain the intention—an intention to which, I trust, I shall be enabled to adhere—of obliterating altogether the recollection of every thing which may have passed during this debate of a mere personal or party character. It may be necessary for me, in the course of my observations, to defend the government against charges which have been brought against it; but in doing so, I shall rest no part of that defence upon recrimination of others, or upon a vindication of the course which the government has pursued, by attempting to show that it has not been more objectionable than the course which others had previously taken. I feel too deeply the importance of the subject before us, not to wish not to be diverted from it by those considerations which are frequently introduced in the heat of debate, which perhaps are necessary in party conflict, and which adds so much zest and excitement to the debates. But, if I forego the advantages which belong to the interest that such topics excite, yet the attention with which all have been heard who have spoken in this discussion, and the disposition which seems to be entertained to attach due weight and importance to all that may be addressed to the House on the subject, convince me that I shall receive as much attention by confining myself strictly to the matter before us, as if I were to indulge in party feelings or recriminations. If I thought that the object of the motion which the hon. member has brought forward, were to obtain a calm and deliberate inquiry into matters connected with the condition of Ireland, my difficulties in opposing the motion would be immensely increased—but I do not believe that it has been brought forward for the purpose of producing that inquiry. We are charged with resisting inquiry—but many who support the motion admit that such an inquiry as I have described is not the object, and some will vote for the

motion, because they believe it implies a want of confidence in her Majesty's government, and an opinion that the settlement of the questions involved ought to be transferred to other hands. No doubt the inference which the public must draw will be, that the carrying of this motion will be tantamount to a declaration of want of confidence in her Majesty's government; and if those who placed us here think that we are not fit for the settlement of affairs—that there is something of party connection which prevents us from taking a proper course—that there is something in the policy which we have pursued with regard to Ireland upon which they differ in opinion from us—then I agree with the hon. and learned member for Bath, that the present is too important a question to permit party connections or party considerations to prevail over their opinions. It will be better for hon. gentlemen to follow up a speech indicating any such feeling, by a vote to the same effect. It is with no unfriendly feeling that I say of this debate, as I say of the Arms-bill, that if any hon. member think the motion should be carried, and that we proposed measures connected with Ireland which have a tendency to offend, whilst no good can result from them, it is then the duty of those who entertain such opinions, whatever the consequence may be, to give the legitimate and practical expression to those opinions. So far from considering that hostile or unfriendly, I think it would be a more manly and parliamentary course, and one infinitely more friendly to the government, that they should thus practically express their opinions, than to imply a difference of opinion from the government, whilst they lent it a hollow support. I speak, Sir, not only of those who have expressed their opinions in this debate, but also of those who have not had an opportunity of speaking; and I say that no party or personal consideration ought to deter them, on an occasion like the present, from giving their honest and sincere opinion—that practical expression which is best implied by a vote. I must now revert to that part of the speech made by the hon. member who introduced this motion, wherein the hon. member said, that he intended his motion to be an arraignment of the conduct of the government, and of the Imperial Parliament, towards Ireland. I shall first refer to that part of his impeachment of the conduct of parliament, which relates to its conduct as to liberality towards Ireland in a pecuniary point of view. The hon. member says, that one of his reasons for being inclined, at least, towards the repeal of the Union, is a strong opinion, that the conduct of the Imperial Parliament towards Ireland, in respect of pecuniary grants, for her peculiar domestic interests, has been parsimonious and niggardly in the extreme, and he also charges parliament with having shown a disposition to do injustice to Ireland with the pecuniary burthens imposed upon her. My firm impression is, that that accusation is unjust and unfounded. You may say, that these are matters of small importance; and I would not have noticed them if they had not been brought forward as one of the prime grounds for the impeachment of the Imperial Parliament. In point of fact, however, they are not matters of small importance, for they are calculated to make a deep impression on the minds of the people of Ireland. The hon. gentleman repeats, what has been said before, that Ireland has been treated in a parsimonious spirit. Now, Sir, these are topics that have undergone repeated consideration. They have been submitted to the tribunals best qualified to examine them with temper and impartiality, to committees of the House of Commons, composed of members actuated by no unkind or unfriendly spirit towards Ireland. There was a committee appointed, some years since, at the instance of a noble lord then a member of this House, from whom I differ in political opinions, but who, during his tenure of a seat in this House, was always remarkable for his attention to the affairs of Ireland, and for his desire to see justice done to her. I allude to the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, the present Lord Monteaigle. Charges similar to those now raised against parliament had then been brought forward, and I now hold in my hand an extract from the report of the committee on the Irish miscellaneous estimates, it says:—"That the committee, in discharging the duty intrusted to them by the House, felt it their duty to refer in the first instance to the principle under which the Irish civil estimates were originally made a part of the public expenditure. By a clause of the Act of Union, the parliament of the United Kingdom was bound to provide, that a sum not less than the sum granted by the parliament of Ireland, on an average of six years immediately preceding the 1st of January, 1800, in premiums for the internal encouragement of agriculture and

manufactures, or for maintaining institutions for charitable and pious purposes, should be applied for a period of twenty years, to such local purposes in Ireland, in such manner as the parliament of the United Kingdom should direct."

That was the contract made. The report then proceeds—"The sum so voted by the Irish parliament was £73,277 per annum, which, for twenty years, would not have exceeded the sum of £1,465,540; but the parliament of the United Kingdom had not confined its liberality within the limits prescribed by a rigid adherence to that rule—for not only have those grants been continued, but considerably augmented."

I will not read the details; but the sums granted by the Irish parliament as the rule—if there had been a niggardly spirit in the Imperial Parliament—would have been £1,460,000, whilst the total amount for twenty-eight years voted by the Imperial Parliament was £5,348,000, making a sum exceeding in a threefold proportion the amount contemplated by the precise terms of the Act of Union.—"It was also necessary to call the attention of the House," proceeds the report, "to the additional sums voted under the head of Irish miscellaneous estimates and civil contingencies. On an average of six years preceding the 1st of January, 1800, they amounted to £127,860. The total amount for twenty-eight years since that time was £5,003,062, in addition to the other £5,000,000, making together a total of £10,000,000 under these two heads."

It is impossible, then, that the ground of accusation against parliament for want of liberality towards Ireland can be maintained. If I compare the sums expended on Ireland with those that have been voted for Scotland, I find an immense preponderance in favour of the former country. And here I entirely exclude the expenditure for the Lord-lieutenant's establishment, and other expenses connected with the civil government, which are necessarily much heavier in Ireland; but, excluding these, I find that the aggregate expenditure on Scotland in the last seven years, amounts only to £668,000, while that of Ireland is no less than £2,262,000. Do I grudge this expenditure? Do I say that this liberality has been misplaced? Not at all. And I would not even have referred to the subject, had it not been for my desire to disprove the allegation of the hon. gentleman, that parliament has acted in a penurious and niggardly spirit towards Ireland. If I take the fulfilment of the obligation contracted at the time of the Union, and test the liberality of parliament by that, I find that the sum voted amounted to three times the sum which parliament contracted to vote. And if I contrast the votes for Ireland with those for Scotland, I find the latter in seven years amounting to about £660,000, and the former to the sum of £2,260,000. So much for the contrast of parliament with respect to the votes. Now with regard to the burthen of taxation; can it be truly said that there is a spirit in the Imperial Parliament hostile to Ireland? The hon. gentleman referred to the scale of contribution proposed at the time of the Union, and considered that the 2.17ths required from Ireland, was too great an amount in proportion to her revenue. Surely the question now is, not what Ireland was required to pay at the period of the Union; the question is, what is now the *animus* and feeling of parliament towards Ireland?—what is the burthen Ireland is required to bear?—what is the confidence Ireland must feel that she shall have justice done to her in respect to taxation? If the two countries are to be united in respect to indirect taxation, it is exceedingly difficult to make any discrimination. The great object is, if you are to be united, to oppose no obstacles to perfect free inter-commerce—to have no system of drawbacks—to oppose no checks to Irish produce coming over to this country, or to the introduction of British produce into Ireland. And therefore, in respect to indirect taxation, nothing would be more difficult or unwise for Ireland herself, than an attempt to establish a discriminating duty. Your customs' duty, as a general rule, must be the same, or you would place impediments on commerce which would be highly injurious. With regard to the excise, the principle was nearly the same. But when there is a distinction drawn with respect to indirect taxation, it is just, perhaps, as it ought to be, in favour of Ireland. Then, as to direct taxation, what is the truth? Would Ireland benefit as to direct taxation by a repeal of the Union? Considering the establishment she would have to maintain, is it possible that a repeal of the Union would benefit Ireland with respect to direct taxation? They pay no window duty in Ireland, though every other part of the empire pays it. There are no assessed taxes there; but other parts of the empire are subject to them. And in a great

financial crisis, when we found it necessary to raise a large sum of money by direct taxation—when we proposed the property-tax, Ireland was exempted from its operation. Now take the post-office. Why, at this moment, the whole of the post-office service in Ireland is conducted at the public charge. There was not, I think, in the last year, more than a sum of £1000 remitted from Ireland on account of the post-office, and perhaps the sum of £1000 in the year preceding; but with the exception of that £2000, since the new arrangement of the post-office duty, Ireland has remitted nothing. The whole advantage of the penny postage is given to Ireland gratuitously, at least the charge of the establishment is equivalent to the amount of the duty. Every other part of the empire has a duty upon soap; Ireland alone is exempt. Am I claiming credit for these things? Am I bringing them forward as a reason for especial gratitude upon the part of the Irish people? No. I would not have mentioned them, had not an overcharge of taxation been stated as a proof of our disposition to do injustice to Ireland; and I think the facts to which I have referred, afford conclusive proofs that there is no such disposition, either with respect to grants for the benefit of that country, or to the share she is called upon to take in the general burthens of the empire; and that the argument in favour of the repeal of the Union upon this ground is utterly unfounded. The hon. gentleman then proceeded to attack the executive government of Ireland, and others have followed in the same course. Why, what are the charges that have been brought against us? Have you charged us with any act of injustice or intolerance? Have you brought forward any proofs on our part of a disposition to encourage or revive religious animosities? Have we rescinded any of the acts of our predecessors, done with the intent of marking disapprobation of a religious spirit hostile to the Roman Catholics? On the contrary; the only things you have to refer to as a proof of misconduct on the part of the Irish government, are almost confined to the appointment to judicial offices of two gentlemen, against whom it seems the only objection is, that they may have been too merciful in the administration of justice. Sir, I am surprised to hear such sweeping condemnations of the government, and to find, when we come to facts, that they rest on such narrow foundations. It is disparaging to Ireland to hear such peculiar importance attached to what relates to judicial patronage. The hon. gentleman says, that one of his charges is, that Ireland is made use of to provide for the dependents of ministers. [Mr. S. O'Brien: I stated it merely from the papers.] Yea, you stated it from the papers; but you went on and adopted the charge, and you repeated that patronage was made use of in Ireland for the benefit of the friends and relations of ministers. Now, if there is one source of patronage in Ireland likely to be more fruitful than any other, the hon. gentleman will probably admit that it will be found in the Irish church. Now, in vindication of myself and the government, I shall take the liberty of reading the first letter written by me to the Lord-lieutenant of Ireland on the subject of the patronage of the Irish church:—"Let it be understood, that in respect to the church preferments you will act upon your own sense of duty, and on the result of your own inquiries; and, if that sense of duty prompts you to prefer the claims of professional merit, let your inquiries be directed to the ascertainment of those claims."

I am perhaps unwise, in some respects, in reading this letter. But we are charged with being subservient to party, with thinking of nothing but parliamentary support, with sacrificing the interests of Ireland to our political friends. I believe, however, the communication I have just read, and which was addressed by me to the Lord-lieutenant, is calculated to disprove the charge. This communication will, indeed, account for some of the difficulties we have had to contend with, in attempting to govern Ireland otherwise than by the intervention of a party. My letter proceeded,—"It is absolutely necessary, for the best interests both of church and state, that the patronage of the Irish church should be applied on such principles. I will willingly forego any parliamentary support which would only be conciliated by the disregard of those principles; though, indeed, the fact is, that (if such considerations are to be attended to) the interests of government are in the long run much better promoted by the honest exercise of patronage than by administering it to favour individual supporters."

That letter, Sir, I addressed in September, 1841, to Earl De Grey, little thinking that an occasion would ever arise when I should be called on, in reply to an unjust

charge, to refer to what I then wrote. The hon. gentleman has also referred to Mr. Purcell's mail-coach contract. For the sake of Ireland, not for the sake of the government, I deprecate such charges made in the old spirit of Irish partisanship. For what purpose has this House directed contracts to be made by public tender, but to prevent unfair favour by encouraging open competition? Public notice of the contract was given. The Irishman was at perfect liberty to underbid the Scotchman or the Englishman. The result of the open competition is, that the Scotchman offers to take the contract for two thousand pounds less, and the Scotchman gets it. And then we are told that we are insulting Ireland by transferring the contract from an Irishman! I regret that the contract passed out of the hands of an Irishman. I wish most heartily that an Irishman had made the lowest offer, and I did what I could do, consistently with my public duty, to prevent any injury in the individual case; but you are disparaging Ireland when you make a public grievance out of such matters as this—[Hear; Yes.] These are small matters, but they make a great portion of the charge against us—[No, no.] Then you concur with me that these things are not worth notice?—[Yes, yes.] I am glad to hear it; but still these charges have been made against the government. Then on the subject of education a most ungenerous charge has been made against us. Had we on this point been disposed to consult party considerations, with a powerful majority in this House, had we determined to withdraw the vote of public money from the national system of education, or had we been disposed to follow a course recommended to us by many plausible arguments, namely, to establish a separate system for the members of the established church, we should have gained great additional support. The strongest feeling existed on this subject in Ireland, and I was urged from many quarters to establish a separate system of education. There is no one act by which we could have more conciliated the conservative party in Ireland; no act which would have been attended with less danger to us in this House, than by yielding to the representations of our friends. We carefully examined the advantages of the present system, and the dangers of the separate system, and we hoped that, by persevering in the continuance of the national system, we might lay the foundation of an abatement of religious animosity, and in that hope we determined to adhere to the national system, though we thereby incurred much hostility. And what is now the return made to us here in the House of Commons? Why, the hon. gentleman says that the Protestant clergy are disgusted with the course we have taken, and he goes on to say that they have good reason to be so; and he makes himself the advocate of a spirit, to which, if I had acceded, no charge would have been urged against me with so much pertinacity. So much for the charges urged against the executive government by the hon. gentleman. I can truly say the intention of the government has been to act fairly towards all parties, to follow out the spirit of the law, which, by abolishing the civil disabilities of the Roman Catholics, established equality between them and the rest of their fellow subjects. The hon. gentleman accuses the government of neglect towards Irishmen, and he read a number of appointments which Irishmen have not received, as if the test of good government was appointing his countrymen to efficient situations. He charges us with not having given a sufficient number of good things to his countrymen. I deny the charge altogether; but it applies to the noble lord opposite rather than to me, and I must allow him to answer for himself. The original Poor-law appointments, the commissioners of police, and several others, were all made by the noble lord. But the hon. gentleman should not confine his views exclusively to Ireland—he should have inquired whether there was not a corresponding number of Irishmen employed in England. I am sorry to hear such charges brought forward; but as they have been, I must observe, that I recollect that some years ago I had to appoint two commissioners for the metropolitan police. Now, these were two exclusively local appointments, and I remember that I neither thought of the religion, nor of the country of the persons I appointed; but it so happened that I selected two Irishmen to act in England, and I never heard a question raised as to the propriety of that appointment. I believe that the same principle holds in other appointments, and that the fact of a man's being an Irishman never operates to his prejudice. There is only one occasion on which I have heard the question raised. I had recently to appoint, in consequence of the liberality of parliament in voting monuments to

naval heroes, to be placed in Greenwich, three sculptors; and it so happened that two out of the three were Irishmen; and the first time I heard of the fact, was in consequence of a paragraph in a newspaper, in which it was said that such is the favour shown to Irishmen, that two out of the three sculptors were Irishmen. I hope that this will remove from the hon. member's mind the impression, though the noble lord is responsible for the appointments in the police and the poor-law, that Irishmen are not equally favoured with Englishmen and Scotchmen. I am convinced that at least the desire of the government is to do equal justice to all three parts of the empire, and whether a candidate be an Irishman or a Scotchman, to appoint the man best qualified for the situation. In the course of the debate, it has appeared that the chief grievances of Ireland may be arranged under three heads—the social grievances, the political grievances, and the religious grievances. By the social grievances described those are meant—and it is impossible to deny their existence—which are connected with the state of the peasantry and of the great majority of the people in Ireland, the demand for land, which, on account of the poverty of the inhabitants, is the only source of existence, and the relation of landlord and tenant. I will first address myself to this social grievance. No man, Sir, can deny its existence; but it is not now known for the first time. It has formed the subject of repeated inquiries, and there are reports of committees of this House whose labours have lasted through whole sessions, containing the fullest information as to the state and condition of the peasantry of Ireland. No man can deny that it is most unsatisfactory, both with respect to the demand for labour and the possession of land; but when hon. gentlemen press the government to apply an immediate remedy, does not experience and common sense teach them, that it is impossible for the government or the legislature to devise an immediate remedy for evils of this nature? It is said, amend the law of landlord and tenant. With respect to any such amendment, my opinion is, that any alteration of the law which seriously affected what I understand by the right of property—namely, the free possession of property—any alteration of that great principle which distinguishes civilized from barbarous communities, would be most injurious to the interests of Ireland. If we tell the possessor of wealth that in Ireland the purchase of land will not be uncontrolled, we shall, in my opinion, strike a fatal blow at property. I speak, however, generally of the rights of property, and not of its abuses. If the hon. gentleman had proposed a committee of inquiry into the state of the law in England and in Ireland, which regulates the relation of landlord and tenant, who is there who would have opposed such an inquiry conducted on a fair principle, for ascertaining whether there is any difference in the law between the two countries, or whether there exists in Ireland any law which inflicts injury upon the people? I, Sir, for one, would certainly not have offered any opposition to such an inquiry; and it is fair to say, that if a remedy can be devised for an undue exercise of power by the landowners in Ireland, without affecting the rights of property, I will give my most attentive consideration to the subject. If you tell me that a tenant-at-will improves the property he occupies, relying on the justice and generosity of his landlord, and that, having so improved that property, he gives a vote, or does some other act, hostile to the feelings of the landlord, and is ejected from his tenancy, no compensation being made to him for his outlay,—if the landlord takes advantage of such hostile vote or act, for the purpose of availing himself of any benefit he may gain by taking possession of the land without affording compensation to the out-going tenant,—that is undoubtedly a gross injustice. I trust, and believe, that this is a case of rare occurrence; and if so, it may be difficult to apply a legislative remedy. But if such cases were of frequent occurrence, and a legislative remedy could be safely applied, I think it would be the duty of the House to afford such remedy. It is, however, a subject of great difficulty. Do not charge the present government with the neglect of it. The hon. member for Rochdale (Mr. S. Crawford), in a previous session, brought in a bill to apply a remedy. I was not a party to oppose that measure. I think, that the most vigorous opposition came from the hon. member for Limerick. [No.] Did not the hon. member vigorously oppose the bill of the hon. member for Rochdale, for regulating the relation of landlord and tenant? At any rate, words to that effect were attributed to the hon. member for Limerick—but as he says, that the words are not his, he could not have used them, but he is reported to have said,

that he would not permit the bill to be introduced without the fullest explanation, as it would establish a dangerous precedent. [Mr. S. O'Brien: I have not looked at the report, but I cannot have used those terms.] It is evident there has been some mistake. The noble lord, the member for Sunderland, suggested measures of a very comprehensive nature, for the purpose of remedying some of the evils connected with the condition of the Irish people; and the noble lord expressed his opinion, that this House would act wisely in making grants on a very extensive scale for the construction of railways in Ireland. The noble lord went so far as to say, that if even a sum of £8,000,000 or £10,000,000 was expended in the formation of railways in Ireland, he thought it would be a cheap outlay on the part of this country. If I could agree with the noble lord, that such expenditure would really conduce to the permanent advantage of Ireland, I should be very little disposed to grudge a considerable outlay in order to lay the foundation of ultimate tranquillity. But I do entertain strong doubts as to the policy of making such extensive outlays for the construction of public works, unless you are most cautious as to the principle on which you proceed. Nothing is more fair than to apply the capital of a country to the execution of such works, if you are perfectly certain those works will succeed as a speculation—that profit will be derived from them, and that from the profit so obtained there may be a return for the advance of capital. But if that is not to be the case—if the railway is to be unprofitable—if there is to be no equivalent return, I doubt the policy of taxing the people of one part of the country for the purpose of erecting public works in another. As I said before, I do not object to the principle of the application of capital, provided the work you undertake to execute is likely to succeed, and to lay the foundation of permanent benefit; but if this is not the case, what is it but applying a temporary stimulus to the industry of the country? What will be your situation after this extensive outlay has been made, when there is no further demand for labour? But the noble lord the late Secretary for Ireland (Lord Morpeth) said, “I would demand a security from the Irish public. I would take a collateral guarantee, by requiring the counties to assess themselves to repay these advances.”

I confess, I greatly doubt the policy of establishing such a relation between the executive government and the counties of Ireland. The same result would follow which has been witnessed in the case of the union workhouses. You advanced some £1,200,000 or £1,500,000, for the purpose of building workhouses in Ireland, requiring repayment from the poor-rates. While the workhouses were in progress there was apparent satisfaction; the masons had plenty of work, and the carpenter was covered with chips, but the time came when they were finished, and the Poor-law brought into operation—they had then to be paid for; and you so contrived it, that the charge fell upon the poorest occupiers—the people were assessed at their twopences and fourpences. [Lord J. Russell: The parliament?] Undoubtedly, for I gave my vote in favour of the bill; but still the fact was so. Then, Sir, came a sudden fall in prices—consequent distress; and, to add to it, came the demand for the repayment of the advances made on account of the workhouses. I mentioned the sudden fall of prices, but, let me add, not in consequence of the tariff of last session, but in consequence of the abundant harvest of the last year. However, that fall in prices naturally enough produced discontent; and what has passed in Ireland since that period, proves that any immediate or sudden disturbance of the laws relating to the introduction of corn into this country, without some special legislation for the case of Ireland, must tend very much to aggravate the distress which now prevails there. Then, Sir, with respect to railways—the noble lord proposed, that we should get a guarantee for our capital from the counties of Ireland in which they were formed. But, Sir, suppose the railways completed, and I must say there seems to be a very mistaken notion very prevalent in the public mind as to the effects of railways. If they are the connecting links between two great manufacturing towns, or pass through a largely mercantile country, then no doubt they must naturally prove of the greatest advantage to those towns; but as to the country through which the railway itself passes, I cannot think that the passage of the merchandise contributes to promote any great prosperity. It is a convenience to the inhabitants; but as to the railway, except as the connecting link between large places, I doubt its great advantage. After we have executed the railway, however, unless it be a pro-

fitable undertaking. I conceive we should have made a bad application of the national wealth, and we should establish a conflict between the land and the executive government; for we should have to come upon the land and demand repayment, and it would be very difficult to adjust the proportions, or to say, that those parts of the country which are distant from the railroad should pay as much as those which are near. There can be no relation between the government and the land in Ireland, which can place them in a worse position than by calling upon the land, years after the work has been executed, to make a repayment. It is therefore on this account that I distrust the recommendation of the noble lord to execute the great lines of railroad, except on a guarantee for the repayment of the advances, by the personal security of those who are willing to undertake the speculation, or from the natural source of the returns from the speculation. I think, Sir, that another recommendation of the noble lord, to promote emigration as a means of relieving the distress of the people, is better entitled to serious consideration than the factitious stimulus to industry by the promotion of public works; be it understood, however, that I am not speaking of the application of the public revenue to the undertaking of works which are likely to be profitable, to which I think we ought to limit the advance of public money. With respect to the social condition of Ireland, therefore, there can be no party question—there can be no difference of political feeling; and in my opinion the interest of the landlord is mainly concerned in giving security to the tenant, and in inducing him to effect improvements in the land. So far as the condition of the country in its social relations is involved, there is fortunately no difference of opinion or of party views; and we are all at liberty, without reference to party considerations, to consider how far the law can be improved to redress the social grievances of Ireland. Now, Sir, with respect to the political condition of Ireland. In my opinion, and to the opinion I have often given expression, there ought to be perfect civil equality. There is an equality so far as the letter of the law is concerned, and I have stated before, when I sat on that side of the House—and if I had any interest in exciting prejudices, that was the time to raise them—that the government ought to act strictly upon the law, recognizing practically its spirit. If I am asked now, whether there ought to be any objection offered to the appointment of a person to civil office because he is a Catholic, or differs from me in religion, I say that there ought not. I know of no civil office for which he ought to be so disqualified. If it be a judicial office, I say there is no disqualification. If the claim of a Catholic entitled him to the judicial seat, he ought not to be excluded from it. In no civil office ought the fact of a man's being a Roman Catholic to be an impediment to his obtaining it. The noble lord says, that attacks were made on the late government in consequence of the appointment of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Sheil), of the right hon. gentleman the member for Kildare (Mr. O'Ferrall) as Secretary to the Admiralty, and of the hon. gentleman the member for Waterford (Mr. Wyse) as a lord of the treasury. I recollect, Sir, to have distinctly stated my opinions on this subject in a debate in this House, and it is too much to hold any government responsible for the violent speeches out of doors of hon. gentlemen professing to be its supporters. I never complained, nay, I entirely approved, of the selection to office of those gentlemen, and I cannot be charged with sanctioning these unjust imputations, for I distinctly stated to the House that I did not countenance that objection. Then the noble lord complained, that we have not removed from the statute-book an oath that is hurtful to the feelings of the Roman Catholics, and he has said that every person taking it charged Roman Catholics with idolatry. This, Sir, only shows that impressions of a grievance may be excited which are not perfectly well founded. I may, Sir, claim credit to myself for having been the person who removed from the statute-book this oath, which the noble lord thinks now remains, and is an offence to the feelings of the Roman Catholics. On proposing the Roman Catholic Relief Bill in 1829, I said, "It is proposed to repeal altogether for parliament, and for office generally, the declaration against transubstantiation. There is no object in retaining it as a test to be taken by the king's subjects, in respect to any office or franchise for which the Roman Catholic is to be hereafter qualified. It was applied originally solely as the instrument of exclusion. It is the mere abjuration of belief in certain doctrinal tenets of the Roman Catholic faith; and I believe there are few Protestants who would not have rejoiced in being relieved



from the necessity of making that declaration as a qualification for the enjoyment of a merely civil privilege, even if it had been determined to continue Roman Catholic exclusion, and if other means of effecting it could have been devised. But when exclusion is to cease, let us be spared the pain of pronouncing an opinion for mere temporal purposes, in regard to the mysteries of religion, and branding as idolatrous the belief of others."

That, Sir, was the spirit with which I was actuated in 1829, and the way in which I gave practical effect to that spirit was, by repealing altogether the declaration against transubstantiation as a qualification for office. Now, I hope that the noble lord will think that answer satisfactory. Proposing then to omit many things heretofore in the oath, likely to be offensive to the feelings of the Catholics, I said: "It will perhaps be observed, that this form of oath omits some abjurations and disclaimers which are inserted in the oaths now required from Roman Catholics. Sir, it does so, and purposely and advisedly. Why insult the Roman Catholic, on whom we are about to confer the equality of civil privilege, by compelling him to reject, in terms, 'the impious position that it is lawful to murder heretics,' or to record his detestation of the 'unchristian principle, that faith is not to be kept with heretics?' We cannot suspect the Roman Catholics of these countries of entertaining such opinions; and if we do suspect them we have been wrong heretofore in giving them their existing privileges. I will neither detract from the force of those disclaimers, which the oath will contain, by the addition of useless incumbrances; nor mortify, by galling and unjust suspicions, the fellow-subjects whom we are inviting, in the spirit of peace and confidence, to share the blessings of equal and indiscriminating laws."

I am quite sure that the noble lord could not wish me to have expressed myself in a spirit different from that; and that is the spirit in which I believe the legislature is now disposed to act in respect of those persons who profess the Roman Catholic religion. Then, with respect to the franchise, I will not follow the noble lord through his speech on this subject. From my respect for his great abilities, and the experience I have had of the general tone of the speeches which I have heard him deliver, I confess I was sorry that, on this occasion, he occupied so great a portion of his speech with accusations. I shall not follow him through those charges which he brought forward. I will not enter into that question; but I will refer to the bill for the registration of voters, brought forward by my noble friend (Lord Stanley). My noble friend, then in opposition, sensible that there were very great evils admitted by all—that there was very great opposition and inconvenience in the registration of voters—did attempt to apply a remedy, without at the same time feeling himself competent to introduce any complete and satisfactory law on the subject of the franchise. Well, we came into power; you say we have a majority, but at any rate we have not used it for the purpose of diminishing the privileges of the Roman Catholics. We were not induced, by the possession of a majority, to persevere in a measure which was said to be a restriction on the franchise. But why should we not have persevered in our own course, if we had been disposed to act in a spirit of hostility? Give us, at least, the credit for having been unwilling to apply our majority for the purpose of working injustice. There are other causes not connected with the registration of voters which tend to diminish the number of voters in Ireland, and we are not willing to propose any measure which shall have the effect of diminishing the franchise, without, at the same time, introducing other measures which shall provide an ample and just compensation for any diminution of the franchise caused by the amendment of the law. What the exact principle of such a measure may be, this is not the time to inquire. You say, give us the English franchise; but I greatly doubt if we gave to Ireland a law precisely like that which prevails in England, with the same construction of course which is applied to the English law, whether the franchise in Ireland would not be very much limited. I except the case of the 40s. freeholders in fee-simple; but if this class of voters were introduced into Ireland, under the same rules which exist in England, I do not think that the franchise would be very greatly extended. But without reference to the circumstances of the two countries, if you apply the same law to the franchise in both countries, you must in that case adopt the construction put upon the English law as to beneficial interest; and if you did that, you would inflict the greatest injury upon the

elective franchise as it exists in Ireland. There cannot be a question upon that subject. I say that in the case of the application of the English law to Ireland—of a literal, exact application of it—so far from its being beneficial in your sense, I believe that it would be of great injury to that country. But I do not wish to act on that narrow spirit; I wish to consider what was really the intention of the Reform Bill; to carry out that intention, and to make compensation for any diminution of the franchise which amending the registration may have caused. I approach now a much more difficult and important part of the question—I mean the ecclesiastical establishment in Ireland. The hon. and learned member for Bath (Mr. Roebuck) calls on me to give a pledge that I will consent to the abolition of the Established Church in Ireland; and he tells me, that if I am not prepared to give that pledge, some other person will be found to give that pledge who will receive the place which I hold. I concur with the hon. member in thinking, that on such a question the defence of power is a most subordinate consideration. I do hope that, if I believed it to be for the public interest to propose an alteration of the law in respect of the Established Church in Ireland, that it is a matter of so much importance, that I should not be deterred from acting on my honest and conscientious conviction, by the fears of the public sentiment on the subject, or of the consequence of finding a majority in this House opposed to me. If I believed that the public necessity required, or the public interests would be promoted by any particular course, I should feel it to be my duty, as a Minister of the Crown, to recommend that course to the adoption of parliament, and to take all the consequences of that act upon myself; and I should not consider it a sufficient excuse for forbearing to submit a proposition to parliament, on a matter of great importance, that the state of public opinion would, in consequence of taking that step, prevent me from continuing in office. I am prepared, therefore, for the consequences of not giving that pledge required of me by the hon. and learned member, and to devolve on others that responsibility which now rests on me, if it can only be returned by pledging myself to destroy the Established Church of Ireland. The hon. and learned member proposes that the whole of the ecclesiastical revenues in Ireland should be appropriated to the purposes of the State. The hon. and learned gentleman considers the Established Church as a badge of slavery—as a proof of dominion—as an insult to the people of Ireland. I cannot regard it in that light; nor do I believe that the people of Ireland so regard it. The hon. and learned member who has expressed himself the most explicitly of all who have spoken on that side of the House, said, he would not say that he would confiscate, but that he would take possession of the whole of the revenues of the Church of Ireland on the part of the state, and leave for subsequent consideration whether any portion of them should be applied to the maintenance of religious establishments, or whether religion should not in all cases be left to the voluntary principle, and those revenues be applied to state purposes. Which of the two should be done he did not state; on that point he has not quite made up his mind; but if the revenues were to be applied to purposes of religion, they ought, he said, to be applied to all religions alike. Sir, other opinions have been put forward in the course of this debate. The noble lord, the member for Sunderland, does not go the whole length of the hon. and learned member; he is not prepared to extinguish the Protestant Church in Ireland. Then the noble lord, the member for London, is prepared to maintain the Established Church as he finds it; the noble lord doubts whether or no that Church is not too liberally provided for, and whether some portion of its revenues might not be diverted to other than ecclesiastical purposes; but he would maintain the Established Church, because, considering its history, and considering the relation in which it stands to the established churches in other parts of the empire, he thinks it would be dangerous to sweep it away. I am sorry that the noble lord does not take some higher ground for maintaining the Established Church than this; for I think that all apprehension of its affecting the Established Church in other branches of the empire is not either a valid or satisfactory ground of argument. The noble viscount, the member for Tiverton (Viscount Palmerston), has expressed also his opinions upon this subject. If I understood him, he would maintain the Church upon its present basis: he thinks that the tithes having been transferred to the proprietors of the land, and they being generally Protestants, it is not felt by the people generally as a burthen. I did not understand from the noble lord that he was pre-

pared to curtail the revenues of the Church, but he proposes a qualified establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, to be effected by a communication with the See of Rome; and one particular measure which he suggested was, that permission should be afforded to individuals to grant endowments to the Roman Catholic clergy. While these are the suggestions of the hon. and learned gentleman and the two noble lords, it is contended by others that there should be perfect equality between the two religious establishments—Protestant and Roman Catholic. ["Hear."] The noble lord (Lord Palmerston) then maintains that principle? Will the noble lord inform me what he understands by equality of religious establishments? Does he mean an equality of revenue? The noble lord said, and said justly:—"Before you disturb that which is established, look well at the consequences; see what are likely to be the legitimate consequences of your first step, and take care that you do not make one which can only lead to conflict and contention. Carry out your measure to its full and legitimate length when you determine upon taking the first step." What then does the noble lord mean by "equality of the religious establishments?" Will the allotment of the revenue in proportion to the population be that equality for which he contends? Shall I give to the Roman Catholics who constitute, say six-sevenths, or whatever the proportion may be, of the population of Ireland—shall I, after I have appropriated to the department of the woods and forests the whole of the ecclesiastical revenues of the Church in Ireland—shall I apply six-sevenths of that revenue for the maintenance of the Roman Catholic religion, leaving the one-seventh in the possession of the Protestant establishment? If I do that, will it produce contentment? Will the noble lord be satisfied? Will others be satisfied after I shall have adopted that proposal? What shall I do with respect to the religious edifices? If I adopt the principle that the Protestant establishment is to have only one-seventh of the revenue of the Church, shall I maintain for him the possession of the whole of the churches of the establishment? When I have reduced the means of serving those churches, shall I leave them still nominally appertaining to the Protestant establishment, or will not the noble lord press me to go one step further, and after I have divested the Protestant religion of six-sevenths of the revenue of the church, won't he then tell me that the churches are too abundant—that the Roman Catholics stand in need of religious edifices, and that I must carry out my principle further, and appropriate the churches of the Protestant establishment to the Catholic worship? [An hon. member: "Certainly."] Certainly! Well, but when I have done that, will that be equality? The Established Church stands in a certain relation to the State. It is represented as a part of the State. Its members occupy seats in the House of Lords. Will it be equality if I leave the Protestant bishop, with his seat in the House of Lords, and tell the Roman Catholic prelate that he is to have no corresponding voice in that House? Will not the principle of equality, then, extend either to the exclusion of the Protestant prelate from the House of Lords, or to the admission of the Roman Catholic prelate into that branch of the Legislature? If the principle of equality applies not merely to ecclesiastical revenue, but to the political relations of the religious establishment with the State, all that I can say is, that the change you propose to make is of a much more extensive and complex nature than that which you may at first contemplate. If that is to be the relation of the Roman Catholic and Protestant establishments in Ireland, as between them and the State, what is the arrangement I am to make with respect to the Roman Catholics in this country? Are the Roman Catholic bishops of Ireland to have seats in the House of Lords, and the Protestant bishops of this country to have seats, and yet the Roman Catholic bishops of England are not to have seats? What relation is the Roman Catholic Church in England to bear towards the State? Should the hon. and learned gentleman succeed in his measure of confiscation of the revenues of the Church, or should the noble lord succeed in his more limited application of that revenue to general ecclesiastical purposes, it appears to me that they will have many important matters to consider before they shall have established that perfect equality for which they both contend as being essential to the ecclesiastical establishments of the country. Now these, I admit, are extreme cases. There may be some principle in the course which the hon. and learned gentleman proposes. I think it unjust—I think it most unwise—I think it most disadvantageous, so to alter the relation in which the Protestant religion stands towards the State in this country;

but, at all events, I think the proposal of the hon. and learned gentleman is established upon some principle. But with respect to the two propositions which the two noble lords opposite contemplate, partial in their extent, they would merely have the effect of weakening the foundation and lessening the security of that which they would leave to the Church, without giving any satisfaction whatever to the Roman Catholics, whom they wish to serve. Why, supposing I should say—I will consider what livings exist in Ireland, where there is a very small population of Protestants—I will respect existing and vested rights, and will merely provide that in cases where there shall be only forty or fifty inhabitants—some ten years hence, the revenues of those livings, amounting to £300 or £400 a-year each, shall go to constitute a fund for the use of the Roman Catholics in those parishes; let me ask, in the first place, what would such a fund amount to? And, secondly, let me ask, supposing I did apply that fund to the purposes I have mentioned, should I give the least satisfaction to the Roman Catholics of Ireland? Supposing the noble lord (the member for Tiverton) would invert the proposition of the noble lord (the member for Sunderland), and instead of giving six-sevenths of the revenue of the Church to the Roman Catholics, he would retain six-sevenths to the Protestants and give one-seventh to the Roman Catholics, I ask whether an arrangement of that kind would be in the slightest degree satisfactory? Would it not, if there exist now any objection to a dominant church, leave that objection as perfectly in force as ever? But by establishing that principle, should I not have made it infinitely more difficult to adopt those other means which the noble lord opposite proposes for me to do? I must, therefore, take the opposite extreme. I look to the Act of Union, but I at once admit that no contracts of that kind can be successfully pleaded, if necessity requires their alteration. I should think it most unfortunate to be compelled to depart from it. I should think it would have a great tendency to shake public confidence in contracts of that kind, if any thing short of absolute necessity made me to depart from it. Such acts are great national compacts. You overcome great prejudices and obstinate objections by making such contracts. You give them all the force of law. You guarantee, as far as the legislature can guarantee, a permanence in their duration. It has a great tendency to shake public confidence in the measures of the legislature, to depart from them without the strongest proof of the necessity of such a course. You may again have to overcome violent objections and prejudices; you may have again to offer equivalent measures, precautions, and securities, for the purpose of abating the force of those prejudices. If you preserve your former compacts with them, the public may place reliance in your new assurances, may accept your new securities, and may again relinquish to you long-cherished prejudices. But if they find they cannot place confidence in you, that after having entered into a compact of this kind, you break that compact with them, your future acts will be accompanied with this great objection, that you diminish your power of doing a public good, by diminishing public confidence in your measures. In 1825, what were the assurances given to the people of this country by the greatest advocates of the Roman Catholics? An hon. gentleman has referred to the speech I made on that occasion. I certainly did say, that I feared that the predictions of those eminent men would not be fulfilled. I hope the hon. gentleman will at least believe, that I might have been sincere as to my apprehensions of the result of the concessions at that time proposed to be made; that I might have mistrusted those who gave us the assurance that the removal of the political disabilities of the Roman Catholics would not in the slightest degree affect the stability of the Protestant Church. No one could doubt that there was great objection on the part of the people of this country to those concessions being made. But the "influence of argument," the apprehension of greater danger if they were withheld, and the positive declarations of the most eminent men, tended to remove the strong objection which had existed against the removal of those disabilities. Mr. Grattan, who boasted, and with justice, of the desperate fidelity with which he adhered to the cause of Ireland, and to the interests of his Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen—Mr. Grattan positively assured the House and the Protestant subjects of the Sovereign, that in his opinion the removal of the Roman Catholic disabilities would add new security to the Established Church. In the preamble of the bill proposed and brought forward by that right hon. gentleman, there was distinctly stated and embodied a declaration to maintain the Established Church

in Ireland; and in addition to this often expressed determination of that eminent man, I find that Mr. Canning concurred in this determination, and even that Mr. Plunkett concurred in it. All these eminent men agreed in saying, that they never would be parties to any act by which the foundations of the national Church would be shaken. The maintenance of that Church, therefore, was not only provided for by national engagements, but also by the most positive asseverations and declarations made by the most eminent and distinguished advocates of the Catholic claims. Unprepared, then, as I am to travel one step in the direction pointed out by the hon. and learned gentleman, shall I advance with the noble lord the member for the City of London, and the noble lord the member for Tiverton, as far as the Established Church is involved, and try to purchase a supposed preservation of it by the relinquishment of a small portion of its revenues? I doubt whether I should succeed in the latter; nor do I think that it would stand on sounder or better ground. I say this with the more confidence, seeing what were the engagements and assertions of the most eminent advocates of the Catholic claims—seeing the engagements that were made at the time the Relief Bill passed—seeing what has been done with respect to the Established Church in the reduction of the number of its bishops, in the reduction of its ecclesiastical revenues—seeing that provision has been made for a new appropriation of them, and a new distribution of them, so that there should not be excess here and starvation there—seeing that the people have been relieved from the payment of church-cess—seeing also, that we have taken the payment of tithes from the occupier, and transferred it to the owner—if all this has been unsuccessful in giving content and tranquillity, am I to expect to obtain it by a partial concession like that which the noble lord proposes? Is it likely, I ask, that the appropriation of so small a sum as by such means could be applied to the Roman Catholic religion, would be productive of general satisfaction? Seeing no advantage that is likely to arise from the adoption of a proposition of this partial nature, I therefore am the more disposed to stand on the law as I find it. After all these attempts that have been made to remove abuses that existed in Ireland, I hope and trust that the great body of the Roman Catholics of that country will not be induced to view the Protestant Church there in the light which the hon. and learned member for Bath did, or that they would be prepared to give their support to any such proposition as he has suggested. The noble lord alluded to some kind of qualified established Catholic religion in Ireland, and some objections were made that, at the time when I brought forward the measure for the removal of their disabilities in 1829, I did not take the opportunity of placing on a more satisfactory basis the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. I am satisfied that if any provision or proposition respecting the relations of the Roman Catholic religion with the State had been united to the bill for the removal of the Catholic disabilities, that it would have obstructed the success of that measure. The expressions used by me on this subject in 1829, namely, as to the relations of the Roman Catholic religion to the State, were as follow:—"I am not insensible to the force of those arguments which have been urged in favour of admitting the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland to a qualified and subordinate establishment, by giving stipends to the Roman Catholic priesthood from the public funds. This was the measure contemplated by Mr. Pitt in 1801, and uniformly urged by Lord Castlereagh, as an arrangement which ought to accompany the removal of the political disabilities of the Roman Catholics. But, on the other hand, there are formidable objections to such an arrangement. . . . Such interference, if accomplished by measures for connecting that Church with the State, would provoke much greater objections throughout the country, and would give much greater offence, than the mere relief of the Roman Catholic from civil incapacities. If we treat the Catholic question as a question of policy, and confine ourselves to the grant of civil privilege, we shall rest the discussion upon grounds totally different from those upon which we should have to discuss it, if we were to imply any sanction of the tenets of the Roman Catholic faith, or to make public provision for the inculcation of its peculiar doctrines."

These were the grounds which induced me in 1829, to think that it would be most unwise to mix up the religious question with the political question, and being most anxious to carry the political measure, I thought the government adopted a wise discretion in refusing to enter upon the subject. I think

also, that at the present time it would be most unwise to make a declaration on this subject. I think, that if the government made a sudden declaration that it intended to attempt the establishment of a concordat, and to make provision for the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland, that it is as doubtful whether, instead of allaying excitement and agitation, it would not rather have the effect of increasing dissatisfaction in Ireland. The noble lord, the member for Tiverton, spoke of permitting individualism to make some provision for the maintenance of the Roman Catholic church, by giving small portions of land as glebes to the Catholic clergy. On that subject, also, I shall decline expressing any opinion rather than in a general debate of this nature going into the subject. I am, therefore, forced back on the proposition of the hon. and learned gentleman. I do not believe that it would be wise to make such concessions as the hon. gentleman and others have recommended, or that they could be granted consistently with the public interests. I cannot consent to do so, or to agree to adopt any of the propositions that have been suggested. But if others, and this House, and the majority of it, believe that the time has arrived for considering any further concession, let them fairly express their opinions by their votes. I believe that the best mode of arranging matters of this nature is by looking to public opinion, expressed by its proper organ, namely, the majority of this House; and believing, if such should be the opinion of this House, that these questions could be much better arranged by others than by myself, or by those who have concurred with me in opinion—I trust that no partiality for the present government—that no former declaration of intentions to support it—that no false delicacy—will permit hon. gentlemen who entertain opinions contrary to those which I have expressed, from recording their votes in accordance with their opinions in a matter of vital importance to the empire. I approach the last subject to which I shall advert, namely, the question of the Repeal of the Union. On a former occasion, I stated that it was the determination of her Majesty's government to use all the power and authority which office can confer, to maintain inviolate the legislative union between the two countries. I then understood, and I still understand, that upon that subject there is an almost unanimous feeling in the House. By the late government, his Majesty King William was induced to announce to parliament that he considered that the repeal of the union was tantamount to the dismemberment of the empire, and a public and solemn declaration was made by both Houses of parliament, and by the Crown at the instance of the government, that all the power and authority of the State should be exerted for the maintenance of the union, and the Crown appealed to all its loyal subjects to co-operate in support of this object. All the members of the then government who gave their opinions upon the subject now under the notice of parliament, declared in the most emphatic manner that there was no extent to which they would not resort for the preservation and the maintenance of the legislative union. Of course, when they talked of resorting to extremes, they did not allude to constitutional attempts that might be made in that House to get a repeal of the union, but to all attempts by physical force or intimidation that might be made to attain that object. I was sorry, however, to hear the noble lord say, that he regarded the discussion of the repeal of the union as on the same footing as the repeal of any other act of parliament. Does the noble lord mean to say, that after the declaration on the part of the Crown to which I have adverted, that there is to be an equal liberty of discussing the repeal of the union, as the rescinding any common act of parliament? I apprehend that in regard to other measures, such a declaration on the part of the Crown would not be resorted to. Surely the Crown would not pronounce with respect to any ordinary act of parliament, that under no circumstances—under no consideration—could its repeal be entertained—that the Crown would do every thing in its power to prevent such repeal, and that, in fine, it considered the repeal of the union would be tantamount to severing the two countries, and a dismemberment of the empire. Surely, with respect to the Corn-law, or other acts of parliament, it would not be the case that all loyal subjects should be called upon to combine in resistance against agitation for its repeal. It is undoubtedly a question of discretion and policy. The Crown did pursue an unusual course in declaring that opinion with regard to the repeal of the union. It was the opinion of the government then in

power. The opinion of the present government is the same. We consider the repeal of the union tantamount to a dismemberment of the empire. We hold that it would be utterly impossible to conduct two independent legislatures under one executive. In the case of war what are you to do? Is the Irish parliament to have perfect liberty to take its own course with regard to war? In the case of revenue, what are you to do? Is the Irish parliament to have its own cruisers for the purpose of protecting its revenue? Is the Irish parliament to have its own army? If it is to be perfectly independent, why not? If it is to have these things, is it not perfectly clear that the seeds of collision are immediately sown, and that there must be war? The interests of the two countries might be differently affected. The hon. member for Limerick talks about non-intercourse. Sir, of the consequences flowing from the establishment of two independent legislatures, one of the least noxious would probably be, that protective duties would be immediately applied, to the detriment of industry and the interruption of commerce. For if you are to have a separate revenue, if you are to have a separate government, if you are to have a separate army, if you are to have a separate fleet for the protection of your revenue, how you are to continue to act harmoniously under one executive, for the period of one year, is a problem that utterly passes my comprehension. Sir, I consider that the injurious effects of a measure of this kind are comparatively and fully demonstrated; but, independently of that, you have the solemn declaration made from the Throne to parliament—made from the Throne by the advice of the late government, which could leave no doubt on the minds of his Majesty's subjects as to the construction which his Majesty and the government put upon this important question. We therefore have, without seeking for any new laws, felt it to be our duty to exercise all the authority of the government, for the purpose of discountenancing the agitation of the question. We have also taken all the measures in our power to adopt for the purpose of preventing the disturbance of the public peace. But I am asked what course I intend to pursue? I am told—Declare your course. Sir, I am prepared to pursue that course which I consider I have pursued already; namely, to administer the law in Ireland upon principles of justice and impartiality. I am prepared to recognise the principle established by the law—that there shall be equality in civil privileges. I am prepared, in respect to the franchise, to give substantially, although not nominally, equality. In respect to the social condition of Ireland—that point upon which, as I have said, no party feeling can prevail—with respect, I say, to the social condition of Ireland, as to the relation between landlord and tenant, I am prepared to give the most deliberate consideration to the important matters involved in those questions. With respect to the Established Church, I have already stated that we are not prepared to make any alteration in the law by which that church is maintained. But, Sir, it is said, Why do you do nothing? Why do you stand with folded arms? Why do you not bring in measures of coercion? I know well what a tendency there is to press for measures of coercion; and, not content with pressing for the employment of the powers and means in the possession of the government, to demand the instant proposal of new coercive laws, and to rely upon them for the suppression of agitation. I claim for the government the entire right to judge with regard to the discretion to be exercised whether as to the application of the existing law, or as to the appeal to parliament for new laws and new powers. I am not ashamed, Sir, of acting with forbearance and moderation in a matter of this kind. I believe, whatever may be the clamour for new restrictions and new coercion, that the hasty and precipitate demand for them does not add to the strength of the executive. I think that the agitation which exists in Ireland, cannot proceed without ranging on the side of the government many who must be alarmed for the consequences which must infallibly flow from it. I speak not now of Protestant or Roman Catholic—I will make no distinction between them. But I ask, can the Roman Catholic proprietor, or can the Protestant proprietor feel himself safe if the principles which are contended for in the course of this agitation are to prevail? What will be that constitution in Ireland which is to be founded upon their appeals to the passions, their appeal to the credulity of ignorance or to distress? Do you believe that the first act of the Irish parliament—if you were to carry your repeal—will be one to realise the expectations that have been excited? As loyal subjects, can you join in the appeal to foreign countries without dishonour? I will not do you the

injustice to suppose that you participate in such disloyalty. If the necessity should arise hereafter, I know that past forbearance will only strengthen the claim of the government upon the assistance of parliament. Some, from weakness or timidity, may have been driven down the stream, and swept into the vortex of this agitation; but as regards the calm, intelligent, and reasoning men in Ireland, I cannot believe that this display of physical force will induce them to join in the ranks of repeal, or blind them to the danger to property, to peace, to security, which is inseparable from this agitation. For myself I say, in answer to these demands for measures of coercion, that I feel a source of strength to the government in showing confidence in the loyalty of those who I believe are well affected to the government. And I believe that forbearance in a government, when it can safely be maintained, will rather add to the strength, than cause the weakness of that government. I say then, Sir, our firm determination is to do every thing that can be done by authority, or by power, to resist the success of the repeal of the union by any other mode than the constitutional one of a deliberate act of the legislature. The Roman Catholics say to me, "If we support you against repeal, what arguments can we assign to our constituents?" Surely this—that you are convinced, after full consideration of the relations between the two countries—after the endurance of the union for the long period of forty years—after the proofs you have had of the consequences of a separate parliament—after the demonstrations that must have been shown to you, that the re-establishment of a really independent legislature must lead to collision and to war, and that the arena of that dreadful warfare must probably be your own island—surely, I say, you can state, that as a reason for refusing to support the agitation for repeal. Other reasons, too, I submit, with all deference, you may assign to your Roman Catholic constituents. Review the events of the past fourteen years, the immense social revolutions that have taken place. Consider that in that period you have been placed on a footing of civil and religious equality with the Protestant part of the community. I speak not of this as a concession; I claim no gratitude for it as a concession; it was entirely a sense of duty which compelled me to do what I did. But it cannot be denied, that in that period there has been a great transfer of power—the municipal franchise, it may be, is still incomplete and imperfect, but still there has been a transfer of power from the Protestants to you, the Roman Catholics. Has there not been manifested, on the part of the Imperial Parliament, towards you, and towards the country to which you belong, the most kindly feeling? Can you doubt, that on the part of the Imperial Parliament there exists that kindly feeling—evinced, as it has been, by a sincere desire, amid all our difficulties, to promote the social welfare of Ireland; by the whole events of the period of which I have spoken; by the indications which have from time to time been manifestly given of the gradual disappearance of the hostility which once grew out of religious differences. Let me appeal to you, by one common fame, by one common glory, by the remembrance of the conflicts in which the men of the two countries have been engaged, and by which they have achieved higher renown than any other country ever yet attained—let me appeal to you, whether the honour of our common glory, the fear of common distress, are not arguments upon which you, in turn, can successfully appeal to your constituents, and your fellow-countrymen—whether these are not a sufficient justification of your resolution to stand by us in our determination to resist the agitation for the repeal of the legislative union of the two countries?

The debate was again adjourned, and on the following day the House divided, when there appeared for the motion, 164; against it, 243; majority, 79.

## STATE OF THE NATION.

JULY 28, 1843.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer having moved that the House do resolve itself into a Committee of Supply—

Lord John Russell rose, and, without making any definite motion on the subject, brought under the notice of the House the great distress existing in all parts of the kingdom. The noble lord, after taking an able review of the home and foreign po-



licy of the government, and acknowledging the preponderance of power possessed by the right hon. baronet (Sir R. Peel) in that House, concluded a most eloquent and impressive speech by calling upon the government to add to the means of the country, by introducing measures calculated to increase its material wealth, augment its commerce, and make it still more powerful as a nation.

SIR ROBERT PEEL:—It is not my intention to find fault with the noble lord for the course he has thought fit to pursue on the present occasion. I admit, that it is perfectly open to him, in the discharge of his constitutional duty, on a motion for a Committee of supply, to deliver his sentiments with respect to the conduct of the government and the position of public affairs, without being under the necessity of testing the opinion of the House by any distinct proposition implying censure on, or a want of confidence in the government. At the same time, I think, if the government deserve the character which the noble lord has attempted to give them, that the noble lord might in that case with perfect success have adopted the more direct and open course of calling on the members of this House, as the representatives of the country, to imply a want of confidence in the government; and if we did deserve the character which the noble lord has given us, not only the House of Commons but the country also would be content to respond to that call. The noble lord has abstained from taking such a course on the present occasion, following the advice which was given him by the noble lord sitting on his right hand (Lord Palmerston), or at least adopting that noble lord's suggestion, which implied, that even if the present government were voluntarily to retire from power, there was such a distrust in the country of those who had preceded them, that the present government, contrary to their own inclinations for retirement, would be forced by the public voice again to assume the direction of affairs. This is the opinion of the noble viscount (Viscount Palmerston), who sits on the right hand of the other noble lord (Lord J. Russell), as to the claims of the probable successors of the present government on the public confidence; and therefore it is, I presume, that the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) acted not only on the suggestions of his own mind, but also on the suggestions afforded by the practical experience of the other noble lord, and his modest estimate of his claims on public confidence. I was rather surprised, considering the very gloomy view which the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) has taken of public affairs, that he should have indulged in that preliminary levity which prefaced the very doleful account he had to give of the condition of the country, and in the course of which he referred to the tunes which he thought "the harmonious instrument" might have been expected to play. I think that the noble lord, if he really entertained so gloomy an opinion of the condition of this country, would have hardly condescended to indulge in what, I should deem, would in such case have been misplaced, and not very successful irony. The noble lord alluded, in the first place, to the progress made in legislation; and he said that nothing would be more easy than to draw up an account of the measures with which we (the government) commenced the session, and in respect to which no progress had been made in bringing them to maturity. It is quite true, that in the execution of our public duty we were desirous, in conformity with the recommendation contained in the Speech from the Throne, to suggest to the consideration of the House measures connected with the improvement of the law, and the domestic condition of the people. It is equally true, that we have been compelled to relinquish the hope that those measures would be brought to a successful result. We proposed measures for facilitating the recovery of small debts, for improving the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the country, and for the purpose of extending throughout the country—at least in the manufacturing districts of the country—the advantage of moral and religious education. Is it our fault that, with respect to these measures, we have been unable to make any progress? Have we shown any unwillingness to devote our time to the consideration of measures in the legislature? The noble lord says, that we command a great majority in the House. Does that circumstance enable us to prevent the discussions which have taken place in this House, or to control the opposition by which some of the measures of the government have been met? Is it our fault that a practice has grown up of continuing, from night to night by adjournment, debates on public affairs? If at any time we suggest that the time has arrived for closing the discussion, and even if our suggestion be in conformity with the general sense of the House, has it not been

the practice to meet that suggestion by motions of adjournment? Is it not notorious that it is not in the power of a majority, however united, to control these discussions if a small party be determined to force on motions of adjournments? On three several occasions, in the course of the session, each debate has continued for five nights; and I ask, whatever the majority of the government might be, what measure could be had recourse to in order to prevent those discussions? The noble lord knows, that though the government were desirous of bringing forward their own measures, to which they attached great importance, they nevertheless did not attempt to interrupt the progress of the debates to which I have alluded, by preventing them from coming on, on days appropriated to government business. Those debates might have been justifiable, and might have been important, and a discussion of five nights each might not have been more than sufficient to legitimately exhaust the subject. But granting all this, do not these debates oppose impediments to the progress of public business? And can any minister, whatever majority he may command, so control the deliberations of this House as to prevent the occupation of time by debates? On the motion of the noble lord opposite (Lord Howick), on the motion respecting the Corn law, and on another motion relative to the policy of the government towards Ireland, five nights were occupied on each of these occasions in the debate. Then there was the debate relative to the conduct of a noble friend of mine, Lord Ellenborough, which occupied three nights, I think. We brought forward, in the discharge of our public duty, the Irish arms bill. We brought it forward because we felt that to be our duty. Ten nights have been occupied in that bill alone in committee, and seventeen nights upon the bill altogether. On two several nights, there had not been less than twenty-two or twenty-three divisions taken in reference to that bill—no doubt from conscientious motives. I presume that no man who originated any of these divisions, several of them on verbal questions rather than on questions of very great importance, acted otherwise than from a sense of public duty. But could we control these divisions? So many divisions in one night, each division occupying ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, would consume a considerable portion of time. Thus, then, I have mentioned that there were fifteen nights consumed in debates on three questions of public importance; and seventeen nights occupied by the Arms bill. [A cheer.] The hon. gentleman who cheers may not have thought that bill necessary; but if the government felt it necessary, viewing the outrages which took place from the possession of fire-arms, to take security for the maintenance of the public peace, we could not shrink from the discharge of that duty, and from asking for the sense of parliament with respect to the measure which we proposed. Parliament had a perfect right to subject the measure to the ordeal of discussion; but after having done so, do not blame us because we have been in consequence unable to proceed with those measures which we thought important, calculated to improve the administration of justice, and introduce useful reforms in other matters connected with the domestic condition of this country. The noble lord spoke with a taunt of our abandonment of the education plan. At any rate, we brought it forward not for the purpose of increasing our own power, or of giving undue power to the Church, but as the result of a careful revision of the condition of the manufacturing population, and of a deep impression that other measures than coercion and force were necessary for laying the foundations of good order. We had a sincere and earnest hope, that there was a wide-spread conviction throughout the country, that a measure of this kind was necessary, and we entertained the expectation, that some scheme of combined education, founded on religion, and inculcating the great truths of Christianity, might be proposed to parliament, and that the Church and Dissenters would be content to acquiesce in its execution. This was the motive alone which induced us to prepare and propose the measure to parliament. It met with very general consent in the House of Commons. I think, speaking generally, the majority of the House of Commons was in favour of that measure, that is to say, on its abstract merits; but as there was no hope of the successful working of that measure, even if the majority of the House consented to it, unless we carried with us the cordial co-operation of those who dissented from the Church, we thought it a wiser course, and one less likely to continue religious animosities, to abandon the measure, than trust to the mere force of a majority for carrying it. This measure differed from others in this respect—that after a majority

consented to it, its success depended on the cordial co-operation of all parties. Supposing the Houses of Commons and Lords, and the Crown, consented to the measure, and supposing it passed into law, yet, unless men were content to abate something of their own prejudices, and to bury in oblivion some of their animosities, there was little chance that ultimate good would have resulted. A determination to persevere with the measure without the cordial co-operation of those who dissented from the Church, might not only have precluded the success of the measure itself, but might have laid the foundation for new and still bitter religious animosities. But were we not justified in making the attempt to prevail upon the Church to relinquish and surrender some of its feelings and prejudices on the subject of a combined system of education? and were we not equally justified when, despairing of cordial concert and harmonious co-operation, we, like prudent men, did not persist in forcing a measure against the will of those classes without whose co-operation and concert and assistance we could not hope for a successful working of the measure? With the opinions expressed by the noble lord opposite upon the first statement of that measure, looking at the amendments which the noble lord gave notice of his intention to propose, and after the approbation which I understood the noble lord to express upon the ultimate relinquishment of the measure, I own I am somewhat surprised at the tone in which the noble lord has spoken of the course which her Majesty's government has taken with reference to the relinquishment of the bill. The noble lord next proceeded to discuss our foreign policy, and the single charge which the noble lord has brought forward against us, connected with our foreign policy, is not the course which we have thought it right to take with regard to Scinde, but our unwillingness to present to the House at this moment the instructions which we have felt it our duty to give with respect to the affairs of Scinde. I know not how it has happened that the noble lord has glanced so lightly over our foreign policy. I should have supposed, that the noble lord, in dealing with that part of the question which he himself has raised, would have contrasted the position of this country now with the position in which the present government had found the foreign policy on their accession to office, not merely with regard to the United States of America, but with reference to the feelings prevalent in France as to this country. As, however, the noble lord has included Scinde and the transactions there, he might, on looking at the map of Scinde, have cast his eye a little to the north-east of that district of country, and have alluded to the position in which her Majesty's present advisers found British power in Afghanistan. For this position the noble lord has omitted the slightest commiseration. I apprehend, however, that at no very remote period it is intended to bring the whole of that question before the House, and in two or three days those documents which, consistently with their sense of duty, the government can produce, will be presented and laid upon the table. The noble lord asked,—“Why not lay before the House the instructions you have given, and enable us to judge of the course you mean to pursue?”

Lord J. Russell, I said I think there may be good reasons for postponing the production of your instructions, but not for withholding the expression of your opinions upon the subject.

Sir Robert Peel: What is the difference between communicating the instructions and stating the views and intentions of the government? Are the operations in the field yet concluded? In one despatch, it is true, it was stated that not another shot would be fired. I am not so sanguine, and I cannot undertake to say that the military operations in that district are entirely concluded; but I can undertake to say, that it is not consistent with the duty of the government, while military operations are proceeding, to lay before the House, in the shape of their instructions, their views as to the course to be pursued in the future government of that country. I can believe that a premature disclosure of those views and intentions, might seriously compromise British interests in that part of the globe. The time will come when her Majesty's government will state the course they have taken; but until I know that the military operations have been concluded, that peace has been restored, and that tranquillity has been established, it is our duty to withhold the production of the instructions we have issued, and which the noble lord seemed so anxious to peruse. I do not apprehend that the noble

lord himself will think, that while operations are going on in Affghanistan, or in any other part of the globe, that we ought to encounter any risk by laying before parliament the instructions we have issued to our naval and military forces. It is difficult to lay down any rule or precedent; you must place confidence in the government with respect to the instructions they issue, and while there remains a chance of British arms being engaged in warfare, or the risk that British interests will be compromised, I trust the House will not call upon the government for a premature disclosure of its views and intentions. The noble lord then proceeded to take a review of the commercial policy of the country, and alluded in particular to the nature of the commercial transactions between this country and the United States, and between this country and the Brazils. No doubt it is greatly to be lamented that our commercial intercourse with the United States has greatly diminished. However, at various periods, that intercourse has been subject to great and considerable fluctuations. The noble lord referred to several years in succession, and took the average of those years as exhibiting our commercial intercourse with the United States. Now, from the papers which the noble lord has quoted, I will read some of the instances in which very great changes have taken place with regard to our commercial intercourse with the United States. In 1836, the declared value of our exports to the United States, amounted to £12,427,000. In the next year it fell to £4,695,000. In the year following, it was £7,585,000; and in the year after, £8,839,000. In the year following the declared value of our exports suddenly fell to £5,200,000. In the next year they rose to £7,098,000; and in the last year, 1842, they were unfortunately reduced to £3,528,000. Here was striking proofs of the fluctuations which had taken place in this trade. But the noble lord says, that it is the immediate duty of the government to take steps for increasing our commercial intercourse. The noble lord says that it is to be done through the operation of commercial treaties, or by means of reducing the import duties on articles the produce of the United States. I should not consider it at all prudent, on a question like the present, to express any positive opinion with respect to commercial treaties; but I must say, the experience of recent attempts has not been very favourable to the noble lord's views. The conclusion does not depend on the will of one party. You enter into negotiations; hopes of a successful issue are continually entertained, and as continually postponed; new proposals are made, there is a natural indisposition to terminate the negotiation, and in the mean time the trade greatly suffers. In experiencing difficulty and failure in negotiating commercial treaties, this country has not been singular. Other countries, from similar motives, have desired to receive in return for concessions, similar concessions from those countries with which they have negotiated. A similar policy has been pursued with regard to the treaties with Portugal and France. On entering office we found negotiations pending with those two countries, and sanguine hopes entertained that they would be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. I will not attempt to lay down any abstract rule with regard to commercial treaties, nor to pronounce any positive opinion on the subject. There may be circumstances which justify us in making reductions on the produce of foreign countries, though you cannot gain a corresponding concession. No doubt, if that foreign country will at the same time reduce the import duties on your productions, you gain a greater advantage than if you merely make a unilateral reduction, by reducing your own import duties only. I shall, therefore, abstain from laying down any abstract *dictum* on this subject; but I must observe that the course which was pursued with regard to America—as to the reduction of duties on American produce—was not so immediately followed by any reduction on the part of the United States as we had every right to expect. And when the noble lord confidently predicts, that if we make further reductions, we shall be met in a corresponding spirit by the United States, all I say is, that past experience hardly justifies the noble lord in uttering that confident expectation. We made last year in the tariff a material reduction in the duties of articles introduced into this country by the United States. We gave the United States great facilities in carrying on an increased intercourse with our colonies. That tariff included many articles, the produce of the United States, on which a material reduction was made. But what was the course which the United States pursued? The government of the United States was aware that these reductions were proposed

to parliament, and that they would probably meet with the assent of parliament, and yet in the month of July last—in July, 1842—notwithstanding the example of liberality which we set, without calling for any corresponding concessions, that government imposed the high tariff against our productions, to which high tariff must be attributed the diminished value of our exports to the United States. I do not say that we are to abstain from reducing our duties on American productions because America does not reduce her duties upon ours. I do not maintain that doctrine; but it does not follow that the example which we set will be followed by the United States in an equally liberal spirit, and to its having not been, the failure of our commerce with the United States must be greatly attributed. This, however, be it remembered, was not the act of the British government, but that of the United States. It was they who imposed prohibitory duties on our produce, a few months after we had made the most important reductions on theirs. I cannot deny the value and amount of the traffic between this country and the United States; but, at the same time, I cannot admit that the noble lord's view of the state of our commercial relations generally is correct, and if it were, it is a condemnation of the very policy which he recommends. But it is to me a satisfaction to find, that within the last six months there have been striking indications of improvement in some of the great branches of the commerce and manufactures of this country. I hold in my hand a return of the exports of British produce and manufactures from all the ports of the empire for the six months ending the 5th of July, 1842, and on comparing the declared value of the exports of these six months with the declared value of the exports for a similar period of the present year, though there is not the improvement we could wish, there is at least a material improvement in some of the great branches of manufactures. The declared value of the exports for the first six months respectively of the years 1842 and 1843, ending July 5, each year, was of—

|                                  |   |   |   |            |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|------------|
| COTTONS, first six months, 1842  | - | - | - | £7,087,000 |
| Ditto 1843                       | - | - | - | 7,983,000  |
| Of LINENS, first six months 1842 | - | - | - | 1,294,000  |
| Ditto 1843                       | - | - | - | 1,361,000  |

In the linen there is but a slight increase, but still there is an increase. In the woollen exports, a trade which was in the course of the last year so greatly depressed, the increase is much more marked:

|                                 |   |   |   |            |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|------------|
| WOOLLENS, first six months 1842 | - | - | - | £2,226,000 |
| Ditto 1843                      | - | - | - | 3,035,000  |

That is the case with respect to the woollen manufacture, which was so materially depressed last year. I speak not of the exports to the United States and Brazil alone, but of the exports to all countries, including Brazil and the United States; and, comparing the first six months of last year with the six months of this, I find a considerable increase. The improvement is still more marked, if you compare the first month, ending July 5, 1843, with that ending July 5, 1842. The declared value of the exports of

|                            |   |   |   |            |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|------------|
| COTTON was, in the         |   |   |   |            |
| Month ending July 5, 1842, | - | - | - | £1,084,000 |
| Ditto, 1843,               | - | - | - | 1,445,000  |
| Of LINENS—                 |   |   |   |            |
| Month ending July 5, 1842, | - | - | - | 201,000    |
| Ditto, 1843,               | - | - | - | 271,000    |
| Of WOOLLENS—               |   |   |   |            |
| Month ending July 5, 1842, | - | - | - | 408,000    |
| Ditto, 1843,               | - | - | - | 791,000    |

This latter item gave a most remarkable indication of improvement, and that in a trade which was most depressed. Therefore, on the whole, comparing the six months of the present year with the past year, there are cheering indications, although I admit that from a single month no confident expectations of permanent improvement can be gathered. It was, however, certainly stated that, bad as the

cotton manufacture was last year, the depression would be greater this year. That prediction, fortunately, has not been realised. The extent of the cotton manufacture, during the first six months of the present year, has greatly exceeded that of 1842. The total consumption for the six months of this year was 688,000 bags, a greater quantity than was ever known. [An hon. member: "It is re-exported."] I admit that the price of the raw material is low, and, as the hon. member says, there may be an export; still there must be a great demand for the article, and the amount of raw material consumed is very remarkable. The years 1835, 1836, and 1837, were years of great prosperity in the cotton manufacture. What was the consumption in the first six months of those years? From the return which I hold in my hand I find that, in 1835, there were 451,984 bags of cotton taken for consumption; in 1836, 474,902; in 1837, 497,302; and in the present year, 1843, the number was 688,584 bags. This is a most remarkable increase, comparing the first six months of the present year with the first six months of those most prosperous years. But to pursue the comparison further, I will take some of the other exports of cotton. The cotton yarn exported in the first six months of 1842 was 58,000,000 lbs., in the first six months of 1843, 62,000,000 lbs.; cotton thread exported in the first six months of 1842, 935,000 lbs.; in 1843, 1,324,000 lbs.; printed calicoes, first six months of 1842, 123,781,000 yards; in 1843, 145,295,000 yards; plain calicoes, first six months of 1842, 152,827,000 yards; in 1843, 253,318,000 yards. In this latter item the increase was enormous, but in them all you find indications of an improved and more healthy condition of our manufactures. How, then, can it be said with justice, that the measures taken by her Majesty's government in the course of last session, either with respect to the Corn-laws or the tariff, have been so fatal to the great branches of our manufacturing industry as was confidently predicted? The noble lord complains that, in the course of the present year, we have not brought forward extensive measures for the alteration of the Corn-laws. If we had done so, I doubt whether the noble lord himself would not have been the first to tell us that we ought not to have opened the question of the Corn-laws last year, unless we had then determined what relaxations we were prepared to bring forward, and that to propose a new law, year after year, was destructive of all confidence, and injurious to the country. But the noble lord says it was inconsistent with that course to bring forward the Canada Corn bill. The noble lord, however, knows that her Majesty's government did not bring forward that measure as a spontaneous act, or on an abstract consideration of policy, but to redeem a pledge made last session, when the Corn-laws were under consideration, and when it was held out to the Canadas that, if they passed certain measures, further facilities for the importation of their corn into this country would be given. It was not in the contemplation of her Majesty's government to disturb the existing law, but merely to fulfil the expectations which had been held out to the Canadas. The noble lord also referred to our financial policy. I wish the noble lord had referred also to the condition of this country in that respect, when we succeeded the last government. The noble lord now says, the measures which he proposed with reference to sugar and corn would have supplied that deficiency; but I think it capable of demonstration that, on his own showing, they would have been insufficient. We thought more decided means were necessary, and that a vigorous effort should be made to equalise the expenditure with the revenue. The noble lord says that we have equally failed, and that in the April of the present year there was a great deficiency. No doubt there was; but the whole of the property-tax had not then been collected, and my right hon. friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer explained that circumstance to the House. Sir, we not only introduced a measure imposing a taxation upon property, rather than a measure imposing a tax upon consumption, but we at the same time removed many of those duties which imposed restrictions upon the commerce of the country, as well as some of those duties which pressed upon articles of consumption. In many essential respects the tariff of last year has not as yet come into effectual operation; and, considering the nature of some of the articles affected by it, I do not think the house is at present in a position to pronounce a positive opinion as to its success. But so far as the experiment has gone, and as far as its effects are known, I think it is satisfactory. My firm opinion is, that the vigorous measure we resorted to for replenishing the public

coffers—the levying of a tax upon property—was absolutely necessary for the public credit of the country. My belief also is, that the reduction of duties upon articles of manufacture, and upon some of those of consumption, have had a salutary effect. Further experience will prove the policy and wisdom of the course so pursued. The noble lord complains of the reduction of the duty upon timber. We have had that subject frequently under consideration. He compares our measure with that which he contemplated, which was a very considerable increase of the duty upon colonial timber, and a very small decrease of the duty upon foreign timber. We thought it advisable to remove that upon colonial, and make a considerable reduction with regard to foreign timber. The noble lord condemns that policy. I greatly doubt whether experience will not prove our policy to have been the best. It was the observation of Mr. Hume, that England possesses iron and coal, and that all she wants to give her an unlimited power over manufactures, is a free access to wood. [Mr Hume: And food.] I was, Sir, quoting the opinions of Mr. Deacon Hume, and not of the hon. gentleman. “It is,” said Mr. Deacon Hume, “therefore, the true policy of the country to facilitate the importation of timber.” In pursuing that policy, Sir, we differed practically from the noble lord; but though a reduction in the amount of revenue derived from the article of timber has been one of the consequences of the course we took on that occasion, I firmly believe that it will be ultimately and permanently for the advantage and benefit of the country. The noble lord then adverted to the domestic circumstances of the country, in connection with our government, and first he spoke of the present unfortunate disposition to insurrection which pervades Wales. The noble lord says that a sufficient explanation of the causes which led to that state of things has not been furnished; and he inquires whether or not we mean to suppress it by force of arms. Sir, we do not propose to pass over the causes of the present movement in the investigations which we are making. The noble lord knows perfectly well that it is quite unconnected with politics, and that these causes, whatever they may be, imply no blame on her Majesty’s government. But, Sir, when the noble lord casts blame upon the government, for their conduct in regard to the suppression of the insurrection in South Wales, he might have recollected what had taken place in the same part of the country when he was a minister of the Crown, and what course the government of which he was then a member took to suppress the rebellion that then existed in the principality. The noble lord might have remembered the cordial aid he received, without reference to political or party distinctions, for the purpose of strengthening the hands of the government. Does the noble lord recollect what took place at Newport? Does the noble lord forget the loss of life which happened upon that occasion? Does the noble lord recollect the attack upon that town which was led on by Mr. Frost? Does the noble lord recollect his own proposition for an increase of the military force, to the extent of 5000 additional men, in the year 1839, for the purpose of suppressing the disturbances in Wales at that time? The noble lord made a proposition to increase the army by 5000 men; and he dwelt, in making that proposition, chiefly upon the disturbances that had recently taken place in Wales. The noble lord then stated, that the government had been taunted with apathy and remissness in the execution of their duty. The noble lord went very fully into the difficulties which there were in immediately suppressing those disturbances by the force of arms. The noble lord said—“There were numerous meetings at which the most inflammatory language was used, and where treasonable and seditious words were spoken. He was most unwilling to resort to new measures of force; he thought that every effort ought to be made by the exertion and vigilance of the government, and by the application of the ordinary powers of the law to suppress those disturbances.”

And the noble lord added:—“But while I always held these opinions, I at the same time, thought, before I had myself any experience with regard to this subject, that there was a power in the ordinary law of the country which might be easily resorted to, in order to put down such mischievous projects and such injurious proceedings. I must say, that the experience I have had teaches me, that although the laws are themselves strong, and apparently efficient, yet that there is great difficulty in putting those laws into operation. With regard to one instance, with respect to which I have seen many observations made—and at various times violent speeches

were made on various occasions—every one has seen in the newspapers the strongest excitement to violence, rebellion, and alarm of every kind; and it has naturally been observed, with regard to such language, that it was seditious, if not treasonable, and that the law ought to be put in force to suppress it. That was my own feeling likewise; but, when I came to any particular instance of such language, the obtaining of evidence and procuring a conviction was not a matter of so much facility as it appeared."

Well, then, the noble lord having acquired that experience in office, he should not be too forward in blaming those who have succeeded him, if, when newspapers report violent and seditious language, the government may not find it so easy at once to punish those who are alleged to hold that language or to suppress such meetings. [Lord J. Russell: I did not confine my observations to Wales, I referred to Ireland also.] The noble lord has spoken not of Ireland only, but of Wales. The noble lord did seem to imply that because there had been violent proceedings in Wales, there had been great apathy and indifference on the part of the government towards their suppression. The noble lord asks, "How can these things be? How is it that the government have permitted them to arrive at such a degree of violence?" I will tell the noble lord that the government have neglected no measure of precaution; they have determined to enforce the law; they have taken every means at their command for the purpose of maintaining the public peace; and they are determined to persevere in that course, and they do hope that the readiness which they evinced when the public peace was before in danger to strengthen the hands of the government will be shown by those who now act in opposition to them. The noble lord received support not merely by the consent given to an increase of the military force when he proposed his 5,000 men, but by the ready and cordial concurrence in the oblivion of all political differences, and the determination to uphold the authority of the law, which added still more to the strength and influence of the executive government. And, Sir, whatever may have been the original causes which led to these outrages in Wales, they were apparently slight; but a slight cause often leads to considerable excitement, which spreads with great rapidity. It is greatly to be deplored that excesses have been committed, and that such a bad spirit exists. As I said before, they are not traceable to discontent with the government—to political discontent. But, at the same time, there cannot be a question that it is the duty of government, even for the preservation of those who are now concerned in these outrages, and in the promotion of these excesses,—it is, I say, true policy and true humanity with respect to them, to use the most vigorous efforts to restrain those parties, to support the law, and to suppress those outrages. I trust that her Majesty's government will not be exposed to quibbling censures upon their conduct with reference to matters of this kind; but that there will be a general and marked disposition on the part of this House to aid the government in the maintenance of the public peace and in the suppression of insurrection. And I hope that no false impression will go forth that any party who is disturbing the public peace will receive any encouragement or sympathy from any quarter of that House. With respect to Ireland, Sir, I must also say that the course which her Majesty's government have taken with regard to that country has been the subject of discussion to a great extent and that very recently; and we are told that in the course of next week the state of Ireland is again to be brought under the consideration of this House. Why, Sir, the ministers of the Crown have already explained to the House the course they have pursued and intend to pursue. They have explained that it is their determination to leave no effort untried for the maintenance of the legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland. They have also stated that they would not be impelled by remonstrances, or by threats, or by apprehensions, or by alarms, beyond their sense of duty, to resort to unusual measures of force; that they would, as far as possible, trust to the efficacy of the ordinary powers of the law, and would take every precaution against disturbing the public peace; that they would make every preparation for the maintenance of tranquillity, but that they would reserve to themselves the unbiassed judgment as to the time and circumstances in which it might become necessary to appeal to force and arms. I believe that the course they have pursued in that country has met with general approbation. Sir, I regret to hear the noble lord censure the government for the course they have pursued for the purpose of marking their approbation of the efforts that have been made to destroy



the legislative union, by the exercise of the prerogatives vested in the government. We have not asked for fresh powers; we have acted with forbearance in the application of those that we possess. We have shown our confidence in the powers of the law; we have not sought to irritate by a premature and hasty application of force; but we have felt it our duty, at the same time, to advise the Crown to exercise its prerogative for the purpose of marking its disapprobation of the conduct of those who have joined in the attempts which have been made to promote the repeal of the union. We have noticed the multitudinous assemblies that have been held, and the inflammatory language used at them; we cannot blind our eyes to the danger to the public peace which they excite. Therefore, we have felt it our duty to advise the Crown to withhold its confidence from those who take an active part in the promotion of those meetings, and we did recommend her Majesty to remove from the commission of the peace those who held such language, or were present at those proceedings. And what course would the noble lord advise the government to take? He says—"Do not apply force hastily." When the noble lord was a minister, he advised the Crown to declare that "the severance of the union would be fatal to the integrity of the empire, and to the existence of this country as a powerful state." We concurred in that view, but the noble lord quarrels with the exercise of the same prerogative of the Crown; now we give a practical proof that we hold the same opinion, by advising the Crown to remove from the commission of the peace those who exercise that commission in giving countenance to those proceedings. I shall not upon this occasion anticipate the debate which is to take place in the course of next week, upon the motion which I conclude it is the intention of the hon. gentleman opposite to proceed with. The noble lord and the right hon. gentleman opposite had a full opportunity of stating their views in the late debate, and I think it unnecessary to enter into the discussion of them again. But, I must say, that we have governed, and are prepared to govern, Ireland in a spirit of justice and impartiality. We have tried to govern it, not through the exclusive agency of a party, but we have tried to govern it upon the principles of justice and impartiality. We know what has been the consequence of that. We know your taunts in some respects to be just, namely, that we have not conciliated the goodwill of one party, and we have lost the confidence of some of the other. We know we might have gained the confidence of one by governing exclusively through its agency. We have not attempted to govern exclusively through a party, but upon more enlarged and more comprehensive principles; and the consequence has been that which was predicted, and with which we are now taunted,—that if we had governed Ireland exclusively upon the principles of party, although we might have exasperated one party, we should preserve the confidence of the other. Still I shall not despair, nor will those who are united with me in the government, that when our intentions are manifested—when it is seen what is the course we have pursued, and that which we are pursuing—we do not despair that there will be a general confidence in the justice and impartiality of our government, and that the applause of rational men, attached to the interests of the country and desirous of its peace and tranquillity, will be the reward of the conduct which we have pursued and are determined to pursue. Sir, I trust the House has not forgotten the position in which we found the government when we were called to office; I trust that they have not forgotten the position of affairs in Canada, the position of affairs in India, the state of the finances, the unfinished war in China, and the state of our trade. I trust they have not forgotten all the difficulties which encompassed the government at the time we assumed the direction of public affairs. I trust they will have seen that the military force in Canada has been materially reduced. I trust that they will have seen that the causes of the differences with the United States—those at least which even threatened us with hostility—have been removed; that those feelings of hostility towards this country which prevailed in France have, I think, been greatly abated, that many of the causes of the differences which obstructed a good understanding with that country no longer exist, and that some of the disputed points between this country and France either have been adjusted, or are in a train to be satisfactorily adjusted; and I trust the House will not overlook, that though the present amount of the revenue may not be sufficient to meet the whole of the demands upon it, yet that the great financial effort made by the country last year has laid the foundation,

in my opinion at least, for equalizing the expenditure and the revenue. It is true that trade is still depressed, but I think I have given some proofs that with respect to the great articles of manufacture, there are at least indications of a revival of trade. Trade is depressed, chiefly, in my opinion, in consequence of the succession of those unfavourable seasons which, for years preceding the last, had of course a material effect upon the capital and industry of this country. The hostile tariff of America, and the deranged state of the circulation of America, no doubt, has contributed still further to increase our commercial difficulties. But still the measures taken in the course of last year and the improvement in the tariff will, I trust, lay the foundation for the repair of the evils that have been felt, and for the increase of the commercial prosperity of this country. I trust the House will not consider that we have been unfaithful to the trust reposed in us; nor that we have forfeited any claim to that confidence which was given to us when we accepted office and entered upon the administration of affairs. By the course we have pursued, we have occasionally, in the execution of our public duty, disappointed the expectation of our friends. They may not have realized the hopes which they were led, as the noble lord says, to entertain, that protection would be carried to the extremest point, or that the agricultural produce of this country would be favoured by still higher duties; but, whatever expectations have been entertained, there was no declaration made either by my colleagues or by myself which could justify our friends in supposing that we would sacrifice our public duty to their expectations. We have exercised the trust reposed by the country in our hands in such a way, I trust, as not to have forfeited the confidence which our friends were disposed to place in us when we came into office. In our endeavours to retain that confidence, we will apply ourselves to the discharge of our public duty, with a firm belief, that whatever may be the threatening aspect of public affairs in particular quarters, there is that energy and public spirit in this country that will enable us to surmount them all, and to place this country, in reference to its domestic affairs, and with reference to its foreign relations, in that proud position which it ought to maintain. Sir, if the noble lord had upon this occasion proposed any vote for testing the confidence of this House in her Majesty's government, we feel that that confidence would not have been withheld from us; that no partial dissatisfaction—no partial disappointment—has alienated from us the approbation and support of our friends, and so long as they are continued, we shall persevere in the discharge of our duty.

At the close of the discussion the order of the day was read. Committee postponed.

## SUPPLY—OPIUM COMPENSATION.

AUGUST 4, 1843.

The House in committee of supply. On the first vote, "That £1,281,211 be granted to certain individuals, the holders of opium surrendered to the Chinese government in 1839, as the amount of compensation due to them, under the 4th article of the treaty"—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said—It is nothing, Sir, but a very strong sense of duty that can induce persons in the situation of my right hon. friend and myself, presiding over the treasury of the country, and having great public duties to perform—I say it is nothing but a strong sense of duty that can induce us to refuse our acquiescence in claims of this nature. It was easy to foresee that there would be raised, partly from sympathy, and partly from other causes, a feeling in favour of such acquiescence. The hon. gentleman who has just sat down has referred to a letter which he has lately received from a distinguished native of India, in which he said that the natives of India had no representative and no organ in this House. I entertain a different view upon that subject from that individual. I am perfectly convinced that party opinions and party considerations will not operate in matters of this kind; and if we wished merely to consult our own ease, and abandon our own duty, we should rather have acquiesced in claims of this nature than have resisted them. But the facts of the case cannot be overlooked. A treaty was entered into by which the Emperor of China stipulated that 6,000,000 dollars should be paid as the value of

the opium that was surrendered to Captain Elliot. Why was that sum fixed upon by Sir Henry Pottinger? Because, as I apprehend, that sum was named at the instance of the noble lord then the secretary for foreign affairs. I have not the document by me, but I have a strong impression that the noble lord, in writing to Sir Henry Pottinger on the subject of the demands that should be made of the Emperor of China for the debts of the Hong merchants, for the indemnification of the expenses of the war, and for compensation to the merchants who had delivered up the opium, named 6,000,000 of dollars as the amount that ought to be demanded as compensation; and the reason why 6,000,000 dollars were demanded, and subsequently inserted in the treaty was, that the noble lord the member for Tiverton and Sir Henry Pottinger concurred in opinion that the 6,000,000 dollars would be a fair compensation. But, Sir, reference has been made to the nature of the trade in opium, and the hon. gentleman who commenced this discussion thought that there was great inconsistency in my making a public declaration that Sir H. Pottinger had been instructed by the present government, not on account of our possession of Hong-Kong, to give any facilities for carrying on a smuggling trade that was interdicted by the Chinese laws, while yet the government of England at the same time encouraged the growth of opium in India, and derived a profit from its monopoly. Now, I confess that I do not see any such inconsistency. [Mr. Mangles—I said making it to suit the Chinese palate.] I find that the course pursued in this respect by the present government is precisely the same as that adopted by the preceding one. It is quite notorious that the growth of opium has been encouraged by the government of India, and that that government has derived a considerable revenue from the sale of it; and yet, at the same time, distinct intimations have been given to the persons who carried on the trade on the coast of China that if they violated the laws of the Chinese government, the British government could not interfere to redress any injury they might receive from loss, but that they must themselves be responsible for that loss. The noble lord opposite (Lord Palmerston), in writing to Captain Elliot on the 15th of June, 1838, gave precisely the instructions I have just referred to. The noble lord was quite aware of the fact that opium was grown in India, and he could not have been ignorant that part of that opium was sent by private individuals for sale to China; yet he told these individuals expressly in that letter that they must bear all the consequences of any violation of the laws of the Chinese government. On the 15th of June, 1838, the noble lord (Lord Palmerston), wrote to Captain Elliot—"As to the smuggling trade in opium, which forms the subject of your despatches of November and December, 1837, I have to state that her Majesty's government cannot interfere for the purpose of enabling British subjects to violate the laws of any country to which they may trade. Any loss, therefore, which such persons may suffer in consequence of the more effectual execution of the Chinese laws, with respect to this subject, must be borne by the parties who have brought the loss on themselves by their own acts."

Those were the words of the late minister for foreign affairs, intimating that there was a distinction between a traffic legalized by the Chinese government, and which was in conformity with its laws, and a trade that was prohibited by those laws. Had there been an interference with the legal traffic of British subjects, in that case there would have been a claim on the British government for redress; but if the traffic was illegal and forbidden by the laws of China, then it is intimated by the noble lord that the parties so trading must themselves be responsible for any loss, and that the British government could not give them any guarantee. It is because the traffic in opium partakes of the nature of a gambling speculation, owing to its being subject to interruption from the Chinese laws, that there are such great vicissitudes in it, such differences in the profit derived, and the loss sustained. It has been justly remarked by my right hon. friend (Mr. Goulburn), this description of the gambling nature of the trade is the language not of the government only but of the merchants themselves; persons conversant with the state of the trade in India, and actually carrying it on. In the evidence given before the committee of 1840, I find distinct admissions to this effect. I will refer to the evidence of Mr. Inglis. He was asked:—"Then the profits of the opium trade were very high?—They were sometimes very high and sometimes very low; I have known people totally ruined by it; there is an instance of a gentleman now living in China, at Macao, who, many years ago, was totally ruined by fluctuation in price; he lost a large fortune in

it. To what would you attribute the great fluctuation in prices?—Sometimes in India, for instance, we have had a report from Malwa of some 6000 or 7000 chests more coming on in the season than had ever come on in any season before from Malwa; it perhaps has not turned out eventually that so much did come; but that report has immediately operated upon the market to a most fatal extent. Have those losses and variations in price ever arisen from the acts of the Chinese government?—Of course, every temporary stoppage of the trade, occasioned by the mandarins, probably to enhance their own squeezes, had the effect of altering the price. The parties engaged in that trade were glad to do it, with the prospect of very high profits, and sometimes they were subject to great losses?—Of course it was, in its very nature, a very gambling trade: of course, every one who went into such a trade must be prepared to meet large losses. Those extreme fluctuations were not felt in the cotton or linen trade?—Not such violent fluctuations; the opium trade is more like the stocks, or things of that kind in this country; a mandarin going up to Peking, for instance, would make a rise in the price of opium, because there has been 100 or 200 chests supposed to be carried up smuggled in his baggage; and you will find in the price currents things of that kind stated as reasons for a rise of price."

Why do I quote these opinions? It is to show the fluctuation of profit and loss in this trade, and that those who embark in it do it with a full knowledge of its illegality, and of those fluctuations being greater on account of that illegality than if it were a trade in accordance with the laws of China. Well, a great crisis arose, and, in circumstances of great difficulty and danger to British subjects, Captain Elliot, the superintendent, required from them the surrender of the opium in their possession. I agree with the hon. and learned gentleman that if those British subjects had suffered death, or torture, or great indignity, in consequence of the non-interference of Captain Elliot, he not being at the time authorised to interfere, still he would have been exposed to blame; but I also think that Captain Elliot acted wisely under the circumstances in taking the authority on himself. However, the opium was given up, and given up on these conditions:—"It is specially to be understood that the proof of British property, and the value of the opium so surrendered, are to be taken on the principle and in the manner to be hereafter defined by the British government."

Now, the hon. member for Guildford tells us that they were entitled to receive the invoice price, which he contends would be the just price. [Mr. Mangles—would be considered just.] If the parties thought the invoice price a just price, why did not they stipulate with Captain Elliot for that price at the time the opium was given up? What could have been more easy? [Sir T. Wilde: It might, then, have been worth more or less?] Yes; but they expressly left it to the British government to determine what the principle of payment should be. The hon. and learned gentleman tells us that our concern is not with the parties who delivered up the opium, but with our own subjects—the natives of India, the producers of opium—who consigned it to British merchants in China, and whose claim, therefore, is not on the Chinese government, but direct on the British treasury. But the late government did not admit any such claim. Applications were constantly made to them before the value could be ascertained, to advance, on account of the distress of the parties, instalments from the treasury, which should be repaid on the recovery of the money from the Chinese government. The late government expressly denied that there existed any such claims on the British treasury. Their answer was, that they would attempt to recover the money from the Chinese government, but that they would not admit any claim on the British treasury. Nothing can be more express than the language used by the late government on those occasions. The noble lord the late Secretary of State for the colonial department will no doubt remember what he said on the occasion of such an application being made. He said,—"The government did not consider it to be consistent with their public duty to recommend parliament to lay such a burthen on the public, and they could not make any proposal to parliament for a grant for the purpose."

Such a claim, therefore, was not admitted, and the estimate of Sir H. Pottinger of the amount that would be required from the Chinese government for compensation was 6,189,000 dollars, subject to some possible abatements. It was because the noble lord and Sir H. Pottinger concurred in thinking that 6,000,000 was a sufficient sum, that that amount was inserted in the treaty. That sum has been paid to

us—it is now in our possession, and we propose to appropriate it in compensation for these demands. But it is said that the sum is inadequate, and as far as I can collect from the speech of the hon. member who spoke last, the amount which he considers we ought to pay would be much nearer 12,000,000 than 6,000,000 dollars. He thinks that the natives of India are not merely entitled to the £1,300,000 which we have recovered under the treaty, but to a further sum of £1,300,000 also. From what fund is that additional sum to be derived? Are we to go back to the empire of China, and after having agreed by treaty to take 6,000,000 of dollars, to tell them we made a mistake and must have more? No one will contend that such a demand on our part would be a just one. So far as China is concerned, you have closed the account, by requiring the Chinese empire to pay the 6,000,000 dollars; and nothing could be more iniquitous, supposing the treaty to have been ratified, and an amicable arrangement concluded, than to go to the emperor, and tell him we had made a mistake and must have more. But if the hon. gentleman's demand for an additional sum be a just one, and if it be admitted that we could not go to China for more, the fact that any such additional sum must come out of the British treasury imposes on us the necessity of still greater caution in coming to a decision. It was left to the British government to determine on what principle compensation should be made, and the question now is, what that principle shall be? The hon. and learned gentleman says, there are two modes of settling the price to be paid—either it shall be the invoice price, that is to say some speculative price agreed to be given at any preceding period, or you shall determine the price in each case by what would have been the value of the opium delivered up to Captain Elliot, supposing it had not been delivered up, and the party had waited for a better market and sold at a higher rate of profit. Why, how could such an inquiry be conducted—an inquiry not only into the cost price, but also into the cost of conveying it to China, varying in each particular case? If the invoice price be paid, it might be the price of a period long before, and if the other principle of the hon. and learned gentleman were adopted, the indemnity must be one for imaginary profits. I hold that the public could have no means of inquiring into what such profits would be. Now, what is the course taken by the government for the purpose of ascertaining the amount really due to the holders? They bore in mind, in the first instance, that this was a trade subject to great fluctuations, on account of its being a gambling speculation in violation of the law. We do not urge the illegality of the traffic as a reason against paying it all. No, we do not say that; but we do urge the illegality as a reason why the parties should bear such loss as would arise out of the risk and hazard of the trade; and we say, that in determining the amount of the compensation, we have a right to ascertain what was the value of the article at the time it was delivered up, remembering the principle on which the opium trade was carried on. We, therefore, did institute inquiries to ascertain the value; that is to say, the value at the time in India and China, not the value of the opium in India, after the account of the detention of British subjects and the seizure of the opium had reached India; but what was the selling price in India previous to that time; and if the price at the time of the seizure was lower than the price became after that news had arrived, then we did think it conformable to equity that we should compensate according to that reduced price, and not according either to the invoice price, or to any vague calculation of future possible profits. The clause in the treaty by which the 6,000,000 dollars were stipulated to be paid, gave the British government full latitude to adopt that principle. Suppose that 100 dollars had been given for a chest of opium in the year preceding, and that on the delivery of that opium the real value was not more than sixty dollars, why then that price of sixty dollars represents the real value of the opium at that time in the market. My hon. friend behind me tells me that I promised last session to grant inquiry. [Mr. Lindsay: Yes, a full and searching inquiry.] A full and searching inquiry! What occurred last session at the time referred to? The noble lord opposite said, if the government were likely to give the subject an effective consideration, then he would recommend the hon. gentleman (Mr. Lindsay) not to divide, though if he did divide, he should divide with him. But if he could get such an assurance from the government, he recommended him not to divide. My hon. friend behind me then said, if her Majesty's government would give the parties an opportunity of proving the value of the opium, and advance money on account, that would be perfectly satisfactory. I replied that the hon. member must use his own discretion; the government would

prosecute inquiries in India, but could not pledge itself that those inquiries should be followed up in this country. The hon. gentleman, I said, must decide for himself, and my hon. friend was so dissatisfied with this answer, that he divided the House. The inquiries I was then referring to were inquiries we had directed three several authorities to make on the subject of these opium claims in India. It has been said that we were in possession of exactly the same information last March. I certainly was very much surprised to hear that assertion made. The date of Lord Ellenborough's letter, reporting the result of his inquiries, is March 22, 1842; the debate in this House took place on the 17th of March, 1842; the letter of Lord Ellenborough, therefore, was not actually written till a few days after that debate. The reply of Sir Henry Pottinger to the reference made to him, by a most singular coincidence, bore date the very day in which the debate took place in this House. His letter was dated Hong Kong, 17th of March, 1842;—it was, therefore, perfectly clear, that when government spoke in March, 1842, they could not be in possession of the replies from Sir Henry Pottinger and Lord Ellenborough to the references for inquiry which we had made to them. We had the letter of Captain Elliot, undoubtedly, which was one of the three, but we had no answer to the inquiries instituted in India for the purpose of ascertaining the value of this opium. Who were the parties we consulted? Were they persons likely to be prejudiced against the fair claims of the owners of opium? The hon. and learned gentleman passed a high eulogium on Captain Elliot; he mentioned the testimonies borne to his character by Lord Melbourne and the Duke of Wellington. Captain Elliot has, since his return from China, been appointed to a high situation in another part of the world. I, myself, when attacks have been occasionally directed against Captain Elliot, have taken the opportunity of his name being mentioned to bear my testimony to the high character, for moral as well as personal courage, which he has shown on several occasions, under circumstances of no ordinary difficulty. I have also borne willing testimony to his high character for disinterestedness and integrity. If he deserves that character, as unquestionably he does, could there be a man better qualified than Captain Elliot to give an opinion on this subject? He was the party who entered into this contract, and he was the best judge of what was the fair understanding, the spirit of the engagement, the intentions of the parties who surrendered to him their opium, in respect of which these claims now arise. Supposing Captain Elliot was perfectly disinterested, could there be one better qualified from his personal knowledge of India and China to pronounce an opinion on this subject? By what other process of inquiry could we ascertain the point? Appoint what commission we might, it would be impossible for them to determine the value of the opium on any such tests or principles, as those laid down by the hon. and learned member for Worcester. We had no alternative but to deal with the question on general principle, and for the purpose of ascertaining that general principle, the authorities to whom we referred were authorities certainly not prejudiced against these claimants. Captain Elliot was one of those to whom we referred. If there was any situation which could induce any man to take a favourable view of these claims, it was the situation in which Captain Elliot had been placed. The loss would not be with him. He was perfectly certain that the government could not resent the delivery of any opinion he might give, favourable to the claims of the holders of opium. He had every conceivable motive, if he were inclined to swerve from the direct path of public duty, for magnifying their claims. He says so expressly in the letter which he wrote. He says,—“I certainly do admit I have a leaning, and I hope it will be thought natural that I should have, to the side of the best price to which I think the opium claimants have any sustainable title in the most liberal consideration of their case.”

I do entreat the attention of the committee to this opinion of Captain Elliot—this man of high integrity, and of the greatest disinterestedness. Admitting that he had a leaning in favour of the claims on which he was called to pronounce an opinion, he adds—“On the other hand, I must uphold this principle, that you shall not exact from the Chinese government a greater sum than you could be fairly entitled to demand, looking to the market price of the article.”

Captain Elliot was under the impression that the demand was to be made on China, whose laws interdicted the introduction of opium; and is it unnatural, when he admitted his leaning in favour of the claims, that he should say, like an honourable man,—“On the other hand, it would not be proper to exact from the Chinese

government a larger price than there is reason to believe would have been recovered for that class of opium if it never had been taken from the merchants?"

Are not those the two principles which ought to have guided an honourable man in deciding such a case? He says—"I was the party that compelled the surrender of this opium; to protect the lives of British subjects who were detained, I asked the surrender of the opium; it was delivered to me in honourable confidence—I promised indemnity."

We admit the facts, and we refer to him who promised the indemnity, and say:—"You who were on the spot, you who knew the value of the opium, you who knew the principle on which the surrender took place, tell us your opinion as to the principle which should guide us in giving compensation."

Captain Elliot says:—"I will. My leaning is in favour of the claims, but, on the other hand, you cannot exact from the Chinese authorities a greater sum than that opium, if sold in the market at the time, would have brought to its possessor."

So much for Captain Elliot. We also referred to the Governor-general in council. You dwell, and justly, on the peculiar circumstances of the native Indians; you call attention to the fact, that they are not very conversant with our laws, that they see the growth of opium encouraged by the Indian government, that they consign it to British subjects living at Canton,—but who are their natural protectors? Surely the Governor-general in council. What prejudice can they have against the claims of the native merchants? The Indian revenues are not to bear the loss. No one supposes that the charge is to fall on the finances of India. It is admitted it cannot fall on China; it is clear if the sum is inadequate the charge must fall on the British treasury. The finances of India being exempt from all liability, there again we refer to an authority above all suspicion of being interested in favour of the British government and adverse to the native owners of the opium. We selected the particular authority charged with the protection of native Indian interests. The governor in council considered the principle on which compensation should be made; they came to the same conclusion that the selling price in India at the time immediately previous to the detention of Captain Elliot and British agents should be the rule observed in this case. They, too, had come to the conclusion that the selling price in India, immediately previous to the detention of British subjects, should be the rule observed in this case; and this principle, if practically carried out, would give the sum of 6,000,000 dollars, which was stipulated in the treaty as the amount by which the owners of opium should be compensated. The third authority who has been consulted is Sir Henry Pottinger, who contracted the treaty, and who had carried out the instructions of the noble lord; he proposed 6,000,000 dollars as the sum which the British government should require, and that demand was made and acceded to by the Chinese government. Sir Henry Pottinger stated:—"The inquiries which I have instituted have only tended to satisfy me that it is impossible to arrive at any conclusive or satisfactory opinion as to the value of the opium delivered in."

Sir Henry Pottinger thought then, that without further inquiry in India, which would lead to no practical result, the British government might form an opinion. That opinion the government has attempted to form, and it was in general conformity with Sir Henry Pottinger's report. Some hon. gentlemen might think that the principle of compensation ought to be carried further, but the opinion of the government is in general conformity with those of Captain Elliot, Sir Henry Pottinger, and the Indian government. If the government had stated to the House that the sum recovered under the treaty with the Chinese government was the value of the opium, and if at the same time we had proposed to carry the principle of compensation further, we should have been considered unfaithful guardians of the public purse, and to have shown undue favour to those on whose behalf the claim was made. It is impossible that the government could have any other desire than to do justice. In regard generally to claims of this kind, I think the chief security to the public against lavish expenditure is the treasury, and not the House of Commons. I have seen various claims of the kind brought forward in that House—as the Danish claims, for example—but resisted by the treasury on precisely the same principle as that on which the government resisted the present one. The government might have conciliated favour in that House, and might have spared themselves the oburgation of my hon. and valued friend behind me, which I am sorry to have incurred. I felt certain that if the government adhered to the course we have chosen, we should be

liable to the imputation that has been cast upon us; but, on the whole, we consider that our public duty requires us to adhere to it. If the House of Commons entertains a different opinion—if they think that good faith requires that another million of money should be advanced from the treasury for the purpose of satisfying the demands of the opium merchants, the House has the power of expressing that opinion. With all deference, however, to the House, I retain my own opinion on the subject. I can assure the House that it was from no indifference or neglect to the subject I have come to that conclusion, but from a conviction that the ends of substantial justice will be satisfied by the arrangement I have proposed.

After a lengthened discussion, the vote was agreed to.

## SLAVE-TRADE SUPPRESSION.

AUGUST 18, 1843.

On the question that the Speaker do leave the chair, to go into a committee on this bill—several members thought it would be advisable, in consequence of the late period in the session at which the bill had been introduced, to defer its further consideration.

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, he should support the motion for going into committee on this bill. He did not think, that the fact of the bill having been brought down to the House late in the session should be made a reason for refusing to go into the consideration of it. The House had not refused, on the ground of the late period of the session, to go into other measures of importance: and it was a dangerous doctrine to lay down that, because it was the month of August, the House should not proceed to the consideration of such a measure. Though the bill was not brought down from the House of Lords till the month of August, there was a distinct notice given last year that the attention of parliament would be called to this most important question—whether British capital should be permitted to be employed in foreign countries in the encouragement of the slave-trade, and whether this mode of evading the provisions of the Consolidated Slave-Trade Abolition Act should be allowed to continue? That notice was given by Lord Brougham, and he was very sorry to hear any remarks made upon the character or motives of that noble and learned lord in connection with this subject. Who had laboured more successfully in the abolition of the slave-trade than Lord Brougham? By whose exertions had more important measures for the purpose been carried? Whose perseverance had done more for the abolition of slavery than that of Lord Brougham? So far from a notice from Lord Brougham that he should bring in a measure on this subject being calculated to produce indifference, he should have thought both from his past conduct, and from the success that had attended his past exertions, that such a notice was liable to have quite a contrary effect, and to have made the parties who were interested fully alive to the possible effect of his proposal; and when the government were charged with indifference and neglect, he must be permitted to say, that the parties who felt an interest in the subject ought to have exerted themselves to ascertain the character of the bill, how far it affected them, and in taking steps, if necessary, by a timely representation to the government, to oppose it in the other House; for it could not be denied that the recommendation of the House of Lords to a measure was a powerful argument in its favour when it came before the House of Commons, more especially when that recommendation was in favour of a bill which, like the present, involved high and important legal considerations. But the representations made to the government were not against the whole bill, but against particular clauses. [An hon. member: And those were not altered.] No, but let them go into committee to discuss the details. To the great principle of the bill no objection was made; that great principle being—was it right, after all the sacrifices made by this country, and still making, in respect to our commerce with the Brazils, with the view to abolish slavery—looking also at the suspicion attaching to us in foreign countries as to the honesty and genuineness of our motives in this respect, was it right that, having prohibited the slave-trade, and the employing of British capital in the slave-trade in our own dominions, we should connive at the employment of that capital, directly or indirectly, in the slave-trade in foreign countries? That was the question the House was called upon to decide—that was the principle upon which the bill proceeded.



If they were prepared to allow British capital to be so employed in foreign countries, why prevent its being employed in the same manner in our own colonies? Because then it would be under the control of the legislature; they could make regulations for it from time to time, and it would be subject to the influence of the public opinion of this country. But if they desired that the slave-trade should be carried on in such a way as that the greatest enormities might exist, and the greatest cruelties be perpetrated, without the control of the legislature or the checks of public opinion, then we should only continue to permit that capital to be so employed in foreign countries, and all the suspicion now entertained by those foreign countries as to our motives would be confirmed. Then, what was the situation of the West Indian proprietor? You tell him, we not only shall not carry on the slave-trade, or cultivate the estate you have purchased, so as to enable you successfully to compete with the foreign sugar grower, but you will permit that British capital, which might be employed in enabling you to maintain the profitable cultivation of your property—if you were allowed to avail yourself of slave-labour—but we will subject you to the additional disadvantage of having that capital employed in encouraging the slave-trade, and slave-labour in foreign countries. Why, there never was so grievous an act of injustice committed as would thus be inflicted on the West Indian interests—those interests which had strong claims on the justice of the House and the country. It was true we had paid the West Indian proprietors twenty millions as compensation when we abolished slavery—a large sum for us to pay, undoubtedly; yet, so far as a permanent compensation to them for the loss sustained by our act, perfectly inadequate, especially when the difficulties of their position in competing with the foreign slave owner were taken into account. It was true, they could not give any additional compensation, but the West Indian proprietors had at least a strong claim upon the justice of the House, and were entitled to demand that parliament should prohibit British capital being brought into competition with them by its being employed in maintaining the slave-trade in foreign countries. Suppose they were to throw open the British markets to the sugar of the Brazils and of Cuba, and bring it into competition with the produce of our West Indian colonies, was it to be tolerated that British capital should be employed, (no effort being made to suppress the slave-trade in those countries,) in bringing that sugar into competition with the West India sugar by means of slave-labour? We had treaties with the Brazils. Did they know that the law of that country prohibiting the slave-trade, was openly violated—that gangs of slaves were marched in open day through their principal towns, and that our treaties were utterly ineffectual, and the Brazilian laws perfectly powerless in preventing that trade. Why, some months ago, while our cruisers were absent from the coast of the Brazils, in protecting British interests at Monte Video and Buenos Ayres, the import of slaves had increased to an enormous extent. Our West India colonies were subject to natural disadvantages—in the quality of the soil and in the climate—as compared with the Brazils; and if, by means of the application of British capital, advantages of cultivation, in addition to those natural advantages, were given to other countries, the fate of the West Indian colonies was sealed, and their ruin would be completed. He spoke only of the great principle of prohibiting the employment of British capital to the encouragement of the slave-trade. An assertion of that principle was necessary to the character of this country. The enormous increase in the cultivation of foreign sugar proved the increase of the slave-trade. He understood that 80,000 or 90,000 slaves had been imported into Cuba. Was there sufficient capital in Cuba to carry on this immense trade? He feared that the application of the capital of other countries must be responsible for the greater part of it. He should wish the House to go into committee, in order to consider the clauses of the bill, but he should hope that no clause would be passed that would tend to defeat its main object. It would be better to defer the bill to another session than to legislate precipitately. If the examination of the bill by legal minds suggested any doubts that did not occur to the House of Lords, perhaps it would be better to defer them for inquiry by a future committee.

The House then went into committee, the various clauses were agreed to, and the House resumed.

## THE ADDRESS.

FEBRUARY 1, 1844.

Lord Clive proposed, and Mr. Cardwell seconded, the Address, in reply to her Majesty's speech.

Mr. Sharman Crawford proposed as an amendment, to add the following words to the tenth paragraph of the Address:—"To assure her Majesty that her faithful Commons will be always desirous to vote such supplies as may be found just and necessary for the public service; but that under the existing circumstances of the country we shall deem it our first and most important duty to inquire into the various grievances complained of by her people, and to devise such measures as may be most effectual for redressing all just causes of complaint."

SIR ROBERT PEEL:—Before I notice the motion which has been made by the hon. gentleman, the member for Rochdale, and on which I apprehend the first division will be taken, or make any remarks on the observations which have fallen from the noble lord, and the hon. member for Montrose, I am sure you will excuse me for expressing, in concurrence, I believe, with the general feeling of the House, the satisfaction with which I heard the speeches of my noble friend and the hon. gentleman who moved and seconded the Address. The hon. gentleman, the member for Montrose, a political opponent of theirs, stated distinctly that he recollected on no occasion to have heard an Address to the Throne moved and seconded with greater judgment and greater ability than have been displayed on the present occasion. I am sure that the ability which my noble friend and the hon. gentleman manifested, accompanied with a sincere and unaffected diffidence and distrust of their own powers has, I will not say won for them, but confirmed them in the general favourable opinion of the House; and I trust that the possession of that favourable opinion, as indicated more than once, will induce them to overcome that feeling of distrust and diffidence in their own powers, and stimulate them to apply their abilities to the public service of the country. Sir, it is my intention to offer a decided opposition to the motion of the hon. member for Rochdale,—more from what has passed in other places than from what he distinctly intimated to-night. I apprehend that motion is intended as the foundation of measures to be adopted for the purpose of stopping the supplies; and, Sir, if I concurred in opinion with the hon. gentleman—if I entertained the opinions which he entertains with respect to the advantage of introducing more of the democratic or popular influence into the constitution of this country—I should be equally energetic in deprecating his motion. I can conceive nothing more injurious to the popular principle of the constitution than to abuse the privileges we possess, and which are calculated for our guidance on great occasions. The power of moving constant adjournments is a power of which it may be right that individuals or a minority should continue in possession, but it is intrusted to them, like other powers, under a great responsibility; and they are seriously affecting the popular principle, and injuring those interests of which they are, I am bound to suppose, the sincere and strenuous advocates, if they lightly call into action instruments which ought only to be invoked on great occasions. The hon. gentleman says that he will stop the supplies until the grievances of the country are redressed—why, what various opinions are entertained both as to grievances themselves and as to the best mode of their redress? If the hon. gentleman, and those who concur entirely in opinion with him, were to form the government of this country, and possessed a great majority in parliament, they would be setting an example fatal to their own power, if they allowed a small minority, differing from them as to the nature of grievances and the mode of redress, to obstruct the conduct of public business, by abusing privileges conferred on them for the public benefit. The important privilege of moving an adjournment is conferred on the minority as a protection against an oppressive majority. I myself have seen no case in which the majority have been disposed to act in such a manner as to justify the adoption of such a course. But, above all, that great instrument of which we are in possession—namely, the power of stopping the supplies—is one which it is of the utmost importance that we should maintain intact, and refrain from impairing its efficiency in a great emergency by an inconsiderate and

unjustifiable use of it, because a small minority differs from a great majority as to what constitutes a public grievance. I have known many occasions on which both the hon. gentleman and the hon. gentleman on his left (Mr. Wallace) have come forward with strong declarations as to their intentions; but in the course of the session their own good judgment and sense of public duty have prevailed over their rash declarations made at its commencement; and I have that confidence in the good sense and judgment of both the hon. gentlemen the members for Rochdale and Greenock, that I am inclined to think they will feel, on reflection, that being the guardians of the great popular instrument by which popular privileges, popular interests, and popular rights, may have to be defended—namely, the power of stopping the supplies—they will not discredit it by resorting to it on any trifling and unjustifiable occasion. Now, with respect to the speech of the hon. member for Montrose, I agree with the noble lord the member for the city of London much more than with the hon. gentleman, that in these times, and according to the practical working of the constitution, it is much better, if we can, to avoid wording the address in a manner that shall compel a division, and on this account, that a government might have great advantage in unfairly resorting to the opposite course. They know what is to be the nature of the speech, and the nature of the address; they might, therefore, if they were inclined, relying on a large majority, get a pledge on some particular question by summoning their friends to attend on the first night of the session. If I, as a minister, wanted to elicit from the House of Commons any declaration on the first day of the session in favour of a particular act of the government, or a particular line of public policy, I should feel it but fair to give public notice of my intention, in order that the opponents of such a measure might be enabled to attend and discuss it. The hon. member for Montrose said there were twenty-three paragraphs in the address, and how is it possible for us to express a deliberate opinion on each of them, worthy of the House of Commons, on the first night of the session? He says, give us at least twenty-four hours to consider. Well, now, if I gave the hon. gentleman twenty-four hours to consider these twenty-three paragraphs, I very much doubt whether, considering the importance of the subjects to which they advert, the interval of twenty-four hours would enable the House of Commons to come to a very satisfactory decision on each of those questions. The hon. gentleman did not show quite so much modesty and distrust in his own opinion as I should have expected, from the demand he made of twenty-four hours' delay; for he came forward with three or four amendments ready prepared, and said the House ought not to allow one moment to pass before it affirmed his opinions. When he called for time to consider the topics mentioned in the address, I certainly expected that he would have followed up his own advice, and not called on the House to pronounce a positive opinion in concurrence with his own on these four or five important questions introduced by him into this debate. Sir, the subjects adverted to are of so much importance, that it is infinitely preferable for the public interests, and the conduct of public business, that we should reserve each for separate discussion rather than attempt to pronounce any collective opinion on all the matters referred to in the speech and the address. I should be sorry to see the practice revived of reading the speech at the council the day before the meeting of parliament, and I think the present practice most fair and most advantageous. I think it advisable not only that a minister should avoid introducing into the speech of the Crown any subject that might provoke warm, perhaps acrimonious, debate, or on which political opinions might differ; but I think it advisable that he should avoid committing the House of Commons without full notice on any question introduced, rather than read the speech the day before, and expect the House of Commons to be ready to discuss all matters that might be contained in it. Sir, I am glad to hear that the general tenor of the speech meets so much the approbation of the noble lord. Reserving himself entirely on the question of Ireland, with regard to which the noble lord has given a distinct notice, I must say I heard with great satisfaction the noble lord means to give to the address his hearty and cordial concurrence, which more than consoles me for some of those taunts in which he has indulged in the course of his speech. With respect to France, the noble lord in his own vindication thought it necessary to refer to the period when there was an unfortunate and material discordance in sentiment and action between France and this country. I shall not

indulge in any acrimony or refer to what were the causes of that difference. I contemplate, as I believe the House contemplates, with great satisfaction, the re-establishment of better feelings between the two countries; and I think it is infinitely better not to disturb it by any reference to the period when there might have been a difference of opinion. If we were to attempt to assign the precise amount of blame to which each party might be liable, I think we should be much more likely to run the risk of reviving animosity than allaying it; but on the main fact, the policy and advantage, not to this country, but to the interests of peace and of civilisation, of maintaining a friendly understanding with France, I have the satisfaction of thinking that this great popular assembly is almost unanimous. Referring to the course which I took in opposition, I never have concealed my sentiments as to the policy of establishing that good understanding, and I will explain fully what I mean by that good understanding. I do not mean any secret engagements between France and this country which can give offence to any of the other powers of Europe: our understanding ought to be patent and open to all the world. We seek not to interfere with or prejudice the rights of any other country—we covet no invasion of the territory of any of them—we wish not to diminish the just influence and authority of any of them—we wish not to propagate particular opinions in other countries with reference to systems of government—we do not wish to shake the attachment of any subjects to their sovereigns; but the time is come when we ask ourselves in France and England this question,—Are our interests so opposed to each other that there is a necessity for our fomenting party interests in other countries, and placing ourselves at the heads of rival factions, because the forms of government are different from our own? If there is no such opposition—if we are agreed in the general principles on which a good understanding should exist, I say again it is for the interest of humanity and civilisation that that good understanding should be permanently established. Does England covet any portion of France? Does France covet any portion of England? Do we seek any extension of territory at the expense of each other? Are our institutions opposed to each other? Each has a popular form of representative responsible government. This I say, on the part of this country, that I am perfectly certain that that good understanding with France would not be a cordial, and could not be a permanent one, if it were purchased by either country at the expense of the concession of one single point of national honour or the compromise of any one principle. In two countries of such high honour and of such great power it is absolutely necessary for the cordiality and for the permanence of that good understanding, that there should neither be any secret engagement, or special contract with which any other country can find fault; neither should it be in the power of the minister of the one country to boast that he has promoted, or attempted to promote, that accord, by obtaining for one any advantage over the other. On the part of France, I say at once, that no such concession has been made by the French government—there has been no compromise of any right; on our own part also I make the same declaration. There has been no concession on our part; no compromise of any right, or of any principle whatever. Now, what is the position of the two countries? We stand each of us at the western extremity of Europe, governed by similar institutions, and if we are not agreed our disagreement must influence the policy of every country with which we are connected. We are also in contact not only with the western states of Europe, but more than other countries with that great quarter of the globe which lies on the other side of the Atlantic. If we are to have different interests, if there is to be an English party and a French party in every state, I can only say that England and France will be the curses of the world, there will be no advance in well-constituted institutions; we shall be powerful enough to obstruct; but, for want of concord and agreement, we shall be unable to promote the successful results of the domestic policy of any state. This very day I read a letter from our representative at Athens, a very able and distinguished man, Sir Edmund Lyons, referring, I will not say to the conflict, but to that great discussion which is going on in Greece, and which, I trust, will be most favourable to the future interests of that country with respect to the establishment of a free constitution; the advice given by Sir E. Lyons is in conformity with the public sentiment in this country. His advice is in favour of the establishment of such institutions as are most in consonance with a limited monarchy, with all the privileges of a limited monarchy, and yet, at the

same time, with a free expression of the popular will. If there is discordance between France and England at a period of such a great social revolution in Greece—if, as I said before, there is an English party and a French party, and this man is at the head of the English party, and another man at the head of the French party, there is little probability that the march of events will be smooth, and the result of that effort to establish these institutions successful. But when Sir E. Lyons is enabled to write on the 10th of January last, as he did write, and as I read this day.—“This is the advice which, when consulted, I have given, and I rejoice to say that I can rely upon the entire, the cordial, the persevering support, of the same opinions from M. Piscatory, the minister of France,”—I ask, is not that alone a decided proof at such a crisis of a nation's fate, of the great advantage of agreement between two such countries as England and France? The hon. member for Montrose, who is the representative of one set of opinions in this House, I presume I may call him the organ of extreme popular opinions, and the noble lord, the member for the city of London, the representative and organ of a great party in this House opposed to the government, have declared their concurrence in the sentiment I have ventured to express as to the importance of that agreement. I believe they are the feelings of the great body of the people of this country. There is no wish here to recur to past animosities, or revive those feelings of national antipathy and hostility, which ought to be converted on account of our vicinity into sentiments of reciprocal and mutual good-will. Such feelings are, in fact, entertained, notwithstanding our past conflicts, by the great body of the people. We admit the glory of France; we admit her military renown. No country in the world has attained a higher reputation in war, by the skill of her great commanders and the intrepid valour of her soldiers, than France. I do hope that great and powerful people will feel so conscious of their honour and renown, that they will not think it necessary to countenance feelings of hostility, or recur to past military operations for the purpose of securing to France that reputation of which they don't stand in need. I believe the cordial concurrence of the House in an address, declaring satisfaction at friendly relations between the two countries, will go far to satisfy the people of France that such are our honest and unaffected feelings. Sir, with respect to Ireland, I shall follow the example of the noble lord. Her Majesty declares her reluctance, while the legal proceedings are pending, to refer to those proceedings; and it is indeed impossible to refer to parties connected with affairs in that country without in some way alluding to the trials now going on. The noble lord has named a day (in anticipation that those trials will then be closed) when he intends to bring forward the affairs of that country; and I am on that account the less disposed to refer to those matters. Sir, almost the only other subject of importance to which the noble lord alluded was that of the Corn-laws. The hon. member for Montrose stated, that in 1841, I complained of the then government for not intimating in the royal speech their intention of bringing forward that subject, and I recollect observing that, considering the magnitude of the subject and the complicated interests it involved, when the government had made up their minds to bring it forward, they should have taken that course which the present government pursued in 1842, when there was a distinct reference in the royal speech to the Corn-laws, and a recommendation to take them under consideration. The hon. member added, that as the subject is not mentioned in the speech this session, we do not, he supposes, intend to alter the existing law. Sir, he is right in that supposition. Had the government entertained any such intention, they would have intimated it in the speech from the throne; and he is, therefore, correct in the inference he draws from our silence. The noble lord said, he thought the agriculturists—whom, sometimes, curiously enough, he defends against me, while at others, he attacks them himself, have reason to complain of my conduct. He says, there are three classes of opinions on the subject of the Corn-laws. [Lord J. Russell: “On commercial policy, generally.”] I thought the noble lord spoke with reference to the Corn-laws. One opinion, he said, was, that it was desirable to protect native produce; that the present protection was not sufficient, and that it ought to be carried to a greater extent, regardless of our foreign trade. Another opinion, he said, was, that there ought to be an immediate and total repeal of all duties on corn; that if taxation existed, it should exist only as the means of raising revenue, and should not be instrumental to “protection,” properly so called. A third opinion,

he said, was (and he added that he thought I had the honour to concur with him in the general principle), that although it might be true that in a new state of society, and abstractedly speaking, there should be no protection for native interests, yet in a country like ours, with such complicated relations and such large vested interests, and with so vast an amount of taxation, it would be dangerous to apply principles even abstractedly right, incurring the risk of a great disturbance of capital and of great injury to those engaged in existing arrangements. Sir, in that general principle I do certainly concur. I believe the abolition of the Corn-laws would produce great confusion and distress. There is, however, this difference between us—the difference between the fixed duty and the graduated scale. Now, here I retain my own opinions. Agreeing in the general principles as I have stated, with the noble lord, he proposes to secure his protection by a fixed duty, and he says members of parliament are liable to the invidious imputation of being actuated by personal interests in advocating the sliding-scale. Surely the same suspicion attaches to the fixed duty plan. The noble lord might say, I propose this fixed duty for the purposes of revenue, but if that duty be carried high, though intended by him for revenue merely, it operates in the same way as a graduated duty—it operates as a protection. If the noble lord intend it for revenue merely,—if he think there is no claim on the part of the agricultural interest to protection in any shape whatever, then I retain my opinion that the noble lord will find it extremely difficult to resist the argument, that if this duty be laid on foreign corn for the purpose of revenue only, and not for protection, why not apply it to corn of domestic produce? When the noble lord is defending his fixed duty on wheat as a fixed duty imposed, not for protection, but for revenue, he will have the case of barley and of malt quoted against him, and will be told that with respect to other descriptions of corn, such as barley, we do raise a large revenue from our domestic produce, and that if you do think it right to have a duty on wheat, not for protection, but for revenue, why not lay a tax on wheat ground at the mill, and not confine yourselves to taxes on the imports. Why not pursue, with respect to wheat, the course you have taken with respect to barley, and subject both foreign and home produce to equal duties—provided you are sincere in enforcing your duty, not on account of protection, but really mean to impose it on account of revenue. And what would you say to the representatives on whom you say it is so invidious to bestow protection on their own interests? Would you say, “I am exceedingly sorry to give you protection; it is a very invidious thing, and I think you have no right to it, but I am obliged to confer this unexpected benefit on you most reluctantly, because I mean to enforce my duty on foreign corn, not for protection, but for revenue.” The noble lord, I think, would find it difficult to prevail on his constituents to adopt that distinction. Sir, I stated last year—not because I contemplated alteration in the law at any future period, but because the question was put to me, that the government were not then prepared to alter the existing law. But when pressed on the part of the government to make a declaration that at all times, and under all circumstances, I would adhere to the existing law, I said that such a declaration on my part was inconsistent with the duty which I owed to the Crown, but I did not state that for the purpose of reserving to the government any escape from this question. The hon. gentleman has said that you have three courses open to you; that you may either repeal that law, for as far as a fixed duty is concerned, says the hon. gentleman, it is utterly impossible for you (the government) to propose it. I do not know what it is impossible for any man to do. I hope hon. gentlemen do not think that her Majesty's government are making any reservation with respect to this. But when the noble lord shall think that, in the opinion of the agricultural portion of the community, protection may be set aside in favour of total repeal, whenever that alteration in public opinion shall have taken place, I am strongly inclined to think that the noble lord will be the party to propose a fixed duty, and not myself. But the experience of the present Corn-law has not in the slightest degree shaken my opinion in preferring the principle of the graduated scale to that of the fixed duty. I gave it the preference at the time I proposed it; and nothing that has yet happened has induced me to change my opinion. I say, therefore, now, as I said last year, though I should not, on the part of the government, think it consistent with my public duty to conciliate support by an engagement to adhere, under all circumstances, to a particular law

respecting the imposition of duties—yet I can with equal truth say, I have not contemplated, and do not contemplate, an alteration in the present Corn-law. Why should the government contemplate such an alteration? I believe the prices of corn since the alteration of the present law have been at least as fixed, and subject to as little alteration, as at any previous time. Look to the prices of corn during the last three or four months. It is very difficult to find any period when the prices of corn were more regular or more fixed, with fewer variations than in any former period. The price has varied from 50s. to 52s.; and, I believe, that for the last three or four months that has been the extent of the variation. And then as to the price of corn in relation to dearthness. I have here an account of the average prices of corn for the last fifty-four years, from 1790. I find that the present average price of wheat is 50s. 1d. Out of the fifty-four years there are only seven in which the average price has been less than the present price; whilst in forty-seven years it has been higher. Consequently, neither on account of the price of corn, nor on account of variations in that price, am I led to form a more unfavourable opinion with respect to the operations of the present law, than I entertained at the time when, on the part of the Government, I proposed it; and I can consistently again say, that the inference drawn by the hon. gentleman from the silence on this subject in her Majesty's speech is correct; and that, though the government do not bind themselves by engagements inconsistent with their duty to the Sovereign and the country, they have not contemplated, and do not contemplate, any alteration of the law which at present regulates the importation of corn. Sir, I do earnestly hope that the general state of the country justifies the expression with regard to it introduced into the speech from the throne. I do believe there has been a material improvement in some important branches of manufactures and trade. There was a great change in the customs duties in 1842, and there was, I think, a disposition to draw too hasty a conclusion as to the operation of that change. Government asked for time, in order to have an opportunity of judging what would be the effect of the alteration. When we mentioned, last year, that we thought there were indications of improvement, though the noble lord says he joined us in the expression of that opinion, yet I recollect well the statement was doubted by gentlemen on the other side, and we were told we had nothing but prospects of increasing depression. I hope that it is now admitted that a material improvement has taken place in some branches of manufacture. The iron trade, I am aware, is still in a state of depression; but, as was justly said by my hon. friend, the demand for increased means of communication throughout the country, the proposals for new railways, the increased prosperity of those manufactures which require a considerable quantity of iron, will all have the effect of increasing the consumption of that article; and I do trust that the operation of these causes will influence the iron trade in turn, and that we shall not only find indications of, but substantial and active improvements. With respect to the revenue—her Majesty's government, professing not to represent it in too bright colours, state a fact to the House which is consistent with truth, viz., that in the present year the course of deficiency has been suspended, and that the revenue of the present year will at least be amply sufficient to meet the existing charges. I trust, therefore, that the House believe that we do meet parliament in the present year under improved circumstances. Looking to our foreign policy, and to the questions which we have arranged with the United States—a country with which we maintain relations probably as important even as those we maintain with France—if we have not settled all the questions of difference with that country, we have at any rate removed those immediate obstructions to a good understanding which, two years ago, threatened the relations of amity that subsisted between us. With France, without concession or compromise on the part of either government, we are justified in stating, that the most friendly understanding prevails; and we have found that friendly understanding telling with advantage in every quarter of the globe in which the interests of the two countries come in contact. The balance between revenue and expenditure is equalised; and at any rate we have this year put a stop to the accumulation of debt. That depression which visited some of the great interests of this country, and which caused such deprivation and suffering amongst the working classes, is at least in a considerable degree converted into growing prosperity—a prosperity which, I trust, will become still greater. I know

perfectly well that, although suffering and privation are relieved, there still exists, in many parts of the country, distress which we cannot view without sympathy; but this, I trust also, is in the course of being lessened, if not removed. And, on the whole, I do trust that I am justified in stating, that in the performance of our duties towards the Crown and the country, with respect both to foreign relations, the condition of trade, and the state of the revenue, that we are enabled to present ourselves before the assembled parliament of this country as having fulfilled the expectations which we held out as to the prospects of the empire, and the effects of the measures we proposed, and that you will deem we have not been wanting in the duties which we owe to our sovereign and the country.

The House, after a long discussion, divided on the question, that the words proposed by Mr. Crawford be inserted: Ayes, 29; Noes, 285; majority, 256. An amendment by Mr. Hume was also negatived, and the House adjourned.

## STOPPING THE SUPPLIES.

FEBRUARY 6, 1844.

Upon the Order of the Day being read for going into Committee of Supply—Mr. S. Crawford proposed an amendment, to the effect, that it was the duty of that House, as representing the people, to inquire into the various causes of complaint under which the people were suffering, and that those complaints, if justly made, should be redressed previously to granting the supplies.

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, I am very willing to admit that the hon. gentleman opposite is fully entitled to that credit which he took to himself of having discussed that motion he has this night brought forward, with moderation and temper. I think it is impossible for any man who has listened to the observations of the hon. gentleman not to admit this—and I think, also, that it would not be just to attempt to raise any prejudice against this motion by imputing to the hon. gentleman the possible design, at any future period, to obstruct the business of this House by frequent and vexatious motions of adjournment. Whatever course the hon. gentleman may be hereafter advised to adopt—and my confidence in his good sense leads me to hope that unless supported by a very large body of the people out of doors, and by a majority within the House, he would not consider himself justified in pursuing that one to which I have just referred. Of the motion of the hon. gentleman we must judge by a reference to its own merits; and I am sure that he will admit that I have met it in a corresponding spirit with that in which the hon. gentleman has brought it under our notice. I take, therefore, this resolution as it is, and I ask the House at once whether, or not, it be for the public interest that this House should pass a vote in favour of it? The resolution, Sir, consists of two parts. The first insists on its being the immediate duty of this House to make inquiry into grievances alleged or complained of; and the second point denies the competency of the House to grant supplies or to perform any legislative functions whatever, by a defect in its constitution. Why, Sir, if this resolution were to be carried, the House of Commons would, to use a quotation of the hon. member opposite, pronounce itself criminal in the face of the country, and the sooner it abandons its duty the better. This resolution, as well as the speech of the hon. gentleman, is an impeachment of the power and competency of the House, the remedy suggested for which would be the greatest social revolution which any country has ever witnessed. Sir, the hon. gentleman enumerates, among the grievances of the people, which he alleges require immediate redress, the monopoly enjoyed by the East India Company, and the monopoly granted to the Bank of England. He there complains of the passing of the New Poor-law, and considers that it affords a just ground of complaint, and requires, with these monopolies I have named, an immediate inquiry. The hon. gentleman then passed on to the Church Establishment, and stated, that the people of this country were disposed to complain of the existence of the Church Establishment in this portion of the empire, whilst in Ireland he considers it to be a still greater grievance than in this country, in consequence of the peculiar state of society in that part of the kingdom. Even in Scot-



land, too, says the hon. gentleman, the people begin to complain of a Church Establishment. Not satisfied with these complaints, the hon. gentleman even includes in his catalogue of grievances the new police force of the country; and among the various establishments respecting which he prefers charges against parliament, is that of the old office of constitutional constable of the abolition of which he complains, and of its supersession by a hired force. The Corn-laws constitute, also, another great grievance; and what the hon. gentleman proposes is, that we should withhold supplies to the Crown until all these various matters—the charter of the East India Company, the Bank charter, the new Poor-law, the Church Establishment, the Corn-laws, and the constabulary force—shall have been investigated; in short, until the House of Commons shall have passed a resolution to make one simultaneous inquiry into all these questions—that is to say, the supplies having been voted for the service of the year, from April 1843, until April 1844, the House of Commons shall institute such an inquiry as this, into the entire social state of the three constituent parts of the United Kingdom, and of our colonial dependencies. Such a course of proceeding, Sir, is perfectly impracticable. And does the hon. member suppose—even if his own views of the state of society justify him in asserting every thing that is contained in his resolution—does the hon. member seriously think that it would conduce to the remedy of any one of these complaints he has preferred against us, or that it would lead to a satisfactory conclusion of any question connected with a complicated state of society such as our own, that we should proceed to pass a resolution such as this? In the first place, how, let me ask, is such an inquiry to be made? The hon. gentleman does not mean to bring forward a motion for a committee of the whole House for the purpose of embarrassing the government. We understand that—we know that such a motion implies a want of confidence in the government. The House, generally, on such a question, looked upon a motion involving it as representing the views of one party in parliament in opposition to those of the other; but what the hon. gentleman proposes is, that before we grant to the Crown the usual supplies for the public service, we shall resolve ourselves into a committee of the whole House, for the purpose of instituting an inquiry into all these various and important matters. Why, Sir, what would be the effect of such a step, even were it possible? Its effect would be to raise expectations we could never gratify—whilst the still more probable result of such a resolution would be a perfect conviction of the folly of the House which should agree to it. But the hon. gentleman is not contented with affirming the policy of his resolution; he goes still further, and, in the second portion of it, he says, that “This House can have no right to vote supplies, except, as being the representatives of the people, it is imperatively necessary that the charges brought against its present constitution and competency in the petitions which have been received and recorded among its proceedings, should be inquired into, and, if found to be justly made, redressed before this House shall proceed to the voting of supplies.”

And then the hon. gentleman refers to a petition presented some two or three years ago, and very numerously signed, which impeached the competency of the House, and asks us how we can with decency enter upon the duty of voting supplies for the service of her Majesty before we have inquired into all the charges contained in that petition. Why, that petition demanded a complete and radical reform in parliament as essential to redress the grievances of the people. The hon. member who seconded this resolution, stated that there are six millions of adult population in this country, and that only one million of them are represented in the legislature—that the House is guilty of having subjected the remaining five millions to taxation, without giving them, at the same time, a fair and adequate representation in parliament; and his proposition is, that we shall confer the right of the suffrage upon the whole of them. The hon. gentleman does not come forward as the advocate of household suffrage, but maintains that the right to possess the franchise shall be co-extensive with taxation. But if that principle be a just one, I confess I do not see how he can refuse the right to the female portion of the community. Though the hon. gentleman says that it is unjust to subject five millions of people to be taxed without possessing the right of the suffrage, he is obliged to limit his proposition to something less extensive—and excludes females, while on his principles both the male and female portion of the community ought to be invested with the

right to vote. The hon. gentleman appears to say, that they ought. I can only say, then, that the hon. gentleman comes forward as a more comprehensive reformer than any that has hitherto appeared in this House. But why limit the right of suffrage to adults alone? You subject parties under age to taxation, and you make the youth of eighteen years of age liable to serve in the army, and according to the principle laid down by the hon. gentleman, if you impose taxation on such a person, you ought, at the same time, to give him the right to the suffrage to an equal extent. Indeed, the hon. gentleman's proposal is neither more nor less than this, that the whole of the population of this country, and of every part of the United Kingdom, who pay taxes through the operation of indirect taxation, shall, both male and female, have a share in the representation of the people. If the principle of the hon. gentleman be a just principle, is it possible he can contest this conclusion? and depend upon it, his new House of Commons will very speedily be liable to the same charges as are brought against the present, and that a petition will necessarily be soon numerously signed by females and youths and presented to it, saying—"We are entitled to the right of the franchise"—and the new House, arraigned by hundreds and by thousands of persons, will end in being bound to admit its own incompetency, and be exposed to the same charges as are now brought by the hon. gentleman, and those who think with him, against the present House of Commons. From the speech of the hon. gentleman I should have thought he was contending for a repeal of the reform bill—and for a return to the old boroughmongering parliament; for his argument was, that the infusion of the democratic principle into this House has disappointed the public expectation, and inflicted a heavier burthen of taxation on the country than it had before been required to bear. The hon. gentleman did not, certainly, bring this forward as a taunt against reformers—he was not prepared to twit the noble author of the reform bill on this account—but he brought his estimates with respect to different periods together, and shewed that, under the reform bill, there had been an addition of £10,000,000 to the burthens of the people. He says that, in the year 1822, the more moderate parliament of that day had a standing army of only 91,000 men—that you have reformed the parliament, and the army is now augmented to 137,000, and the taxes also are very heavily increased. It would be a legitimate conclusion from the hon. gentleman's principles to go back to those happy times when the army was no greater than the amount he states, than to follow the hon. gentleman in the perilous career he proposes—for his whole argument went to show that economy of the public money, and a resistance to oppression, do not depend upon the constitution of this House, but upon the virtue of the men in it. The hon. gentleman went back to the year 1692, and says, that the House of Commons of that day claimed for the people the right of having frequent parliaments. William the third, a powerful monarch, departed from the engagement he had entered into in this respect, and the consequence was, that the House of Commons determined to refuse the supplies till the public faith, which had been pledged by the Crown, should have been fulfilled. But that virtuous parliament, which, in two successive years—backed, too, by the House of Lords—controlled, and justly controlled, the will of the Crown, had a much less free constitution than the present parliament enjoys; and I must say, judging from the speech of the hon. gentleman, I should have inferred that he is no friend to the present parliament, and that he is making an ingenious argument to show his preference to be in favour of going back to that of 1822—nay, still further, if you have the courage to do so—even to the parliament of 1692.

But again, the hon. gentleman's condemnation of this present parliament was somewhat qualified, for the hon. gentleman, paying a compliment to myself, for which I beg to return him my sincere acknowledgments, said that when it became necessary for us to make a great exertion to equalise the revenue with the expenditure, o the country, the present parliament did, what? Impose additional burthens on the poorer classes, and duties upon articles which though not of exact necessity, yet in a great measure, partake of that character? No; the hon. gentleman's charge against the present parliament was not that they included in their taxation articles of general consumption, but that they were contented to lay an additional burthen upon themselves, instead of trying to lay it on the great body of the people. And they did so—but I cannot see that, in doing so, they betrayed a keen desire to increase

the burthens of the people—or that they by any means deserve that blame which could justify these charges against their competency. 'Take the Poor-law Act, for instance. The hon. gentleman refers to that law as one great grievance. Did the legislature pass that Act merely from a wish to make an alteration in the law? Was it without inquiry that we passed the Poor-law bill? No; commissions were appointed expressly to inquire into every part of the subject, and the great and crying abuses of the late system of relief of the poor were brought to light; and a government, having no other view with reference to that law than to remedy the evils of the old system, which threatened to destroy the comfort and undermine the private character of the bulk of the population, incurred without flinching great unpopularity by introducing the bill in which their remedy was embodied. Again, with respect to the charter of the Bank of England, I should like to see how the hon. gentleman, having obtained his committee, and a resolution to inquire into the subject of the bank charter having been concurred in—I should like to see how the hon. gentleman would go on? Is he aware of the inquiries which have already been made upon this subject? Is the hon. gentleman prepared to conduct such an inquiry? Is he aware that, for three sessions, one branch of the subject alone occupied the attention of a committee of this House—that another committee was subsequently appointed to investigate it, which did not make its report until the end of the then Session of Parliament? Is the hon. gentleman ignorant of all these inquiries? If not, how can he come forward and say that into none of these grievances has inquiry been made? If he thinks that the subject of the charter granted to the Bank of England was not fully investigated, I wish him joy of any inquiry at the bar of this House which he could institute into the whole case of the bank charter. And what, I should like to be informed, are we to do with regard to the church establishment whilst that inquiry is going on? I will venture to say, with reference to the duration of such an inquiry, that the hon. gentleman will find such a variety of opinions upon every part of the subject—so much business added to the investigation in reference to country banks, and to joint-stock banks—so much discussion connected with the question of the Currency-bill of 1819—that I am sure he would be obliged to postpone *ad Græcas Calendas* all the other questions which his resolution embraces. With respect to the other questions, the church establishment, reform in parliament, and so fourth, they are subjects to be decided on by the deliberate sense of the House, after full and adequate discussion, by select committees of the House, or by committees of the whole House. These, then, Sir, are the grounds on which I resist this motion. I say that it is impracticable, and that it would be absurd, to pass a resolution pledging ourselves to inquire into eight or ten different subjects, embracing the entire state of domestic society in this country. For the House of Commons to make a public confession of its own incompetency, and to declare itself "criminal," because a petition was presented two or three years ago, charging it with such imputations, appears to me most extraordinary, and I must say, it is equally improbable that the House of Commons will consent to place itself in such an anomalous position. The hon. gentleman entered into a variety of details, but the House will, I think, agree with me, that this is not the proper time for discussing such matters. The deep importance of the various matters to which the hon. gentleman alluded I am perfectly ready to admit, but I am not prepared to admit that this House is in a situation to enter upon inquiries into the several questions with respect to taxation to which the hon. gentleman has alluded. The hon. gentleman, among other instances of unjust taxation, mentioned the article of tea, and he said it was a gross and scandalous injustice to the poor to lay an equal duty on all descriptions of tea. The House must be aware that there was a discriminating duty on tea, which duty was established from a desire to consult the interests of the great body of the consumers. Why was it abandoned? It was not abandoned as the act of the government, or from any wish to interfere with the interests of the consumers, but after a laborious investigation by a committee of the House of Commons, which led to the conviction that the difficulty of collecting the duties was so great as to render the imposition of an equal duty indispensable. That was the opinion of a right hon. gentleman opposite, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, who then held office as one of the Secretaries of the Treasury, and whose opinion had great influence with the government; and I think I may appeal to the right hon. gentleman to confirm me

in what I say, that if an equal duty on tea was substituted for a discriminating duty, it was not with any view to bear hardly on the working classes, or consult the interests of the government, but merely to give facilities for the proper collection of the revenue. If you could, without fraud, raise an equal amount of revenue from a discriminating as from an equal duty, the government would have no objection whatever to apportion the duty to the quality of the tea; but that was found to be impracticable, and therefore it was that the equal duty was substituted for the discriminating duty. Sir, with regard to the article of beer, I think that the comments of the hon. gentleman cannot have any weight, at all events in reference to my right hon. friend the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, for it was on the advice of my right hon. friend that the government consented to abandon the tax on beer, considering it to be untenable as distinguished from the duty on malt. The House seeing in the proposition of my right hon. friend a means of adding to the comfort of the people at once acceded to it. The House, therefore, agreed to a diminution of the revenue in this particular instance, for no other purpose than that of adding to the comforts of the people; and, consequently, I deny the charge made against this House, of being inattentive to the wants of the people, and of having no disposition to undertake any inquiry which we think may conduce to the advantage of the people. On all the subjects to which the hon. gentlemen have adverted, there have been full and frequent inquiries, and that, I say, shows that there is a strong desire, in reference to taxation, to consult the interests of those on whom taxation falls; but, at the same time, I conjure the House not to lower themselves in the eyes of the country, or injure their character by such a declaration as that we are incompetent to legislate, because a petition numerously signed has claimed for the whole people a right of suffrage, and has branded the House as the unworthy representatives of the nation.

The amendment was negatived by a majority of 108, and the House went into Committee.

## VOTE OF THANKS TO SIR C. NAPIER, AND THE ARMY IN SCINDE.

FEBRUARY 12, 1844.

SIR R. PEEL said, Sir, I rise for the purpose of moving that the thanks of the House be given to a portion of the British army, and to its gallant commander, for services recently performed under very critical circumstances, and during very important operations on the banks of the Indus, which army has, under these circumstances, and during these operations, exhibited proofs of discipline, of constancy and of valour, which have sustained and even exalted the high character of the British army, and have entitled that army and its commander to the public expression of our thanks. With the policy of the measures in the execution of which that army has been employed, I have, upon this occasion, nothing to do. Whether it were justifiable and politic to exact from the Ameers of Scinde penalties on account of the violation of their engagements—whether it were politic to demand the cession of territory in lieu of the tribute to which the Ameers were subject, are questions which, in my opinion, ought to be reserved altogether for separate consideration. I have now to call the attention of the House to the conduct and merits of gallant men performing the first duty of a soldier—namely, obedience to lawful authority, and by the mode in which they performed it, entitling themselves, in my opinion, to the public acknowledgment which I shall propose. Sir, others I consider to be responsible for the measures, the execution of which was committed to Sir Charles Napier. He was employed by the Governor-general. He received instructions from the Governor-general. He had authority, within certain limits, from the Governor-general; but for the employment, the instructions, the authority, the civil power in India, and not Sir Charles Napier, is, in my opinion, altogether responsible. I shall be prepared on the proper occasion, if need be, to vindicate the instructions and authority, but upon the present occasion, I shall altogether abstain from entering into any discussion on the policy of the measures themselves. Sir, the information which has recently been laid on the table of the House, and the degree of public

attention which has been directed to the operations in Scinde, relieve me from the necessity of entering into any detail with regard to the measures which led to the employment of the British army on that occasion. I take it for granted, that every gentleman has read the papers laid on the table of the House, relating to the subject, and I shall not, therefore, enter into any unnecessary detail of the circumstances which led to the British army being placed under the command of Sir Charles Napier. The House would recollect, that about the month of September, 1842, Sir Charles Napier was directed to take command of the British army in Scinde and Beloochistan. The active operations in which he was engaged extended for a period which is included between January 1843, and the latter end of March, in the same year. That period of three months, included the advance upon Emaum Ghur, the battle of Meeanee, and the battle of Hyderabad. These two battles, the most prominent objects to any one contemplating the subject, were fought under very peculiar circumstances. According to the first report of Sir Charles Napier, the force opposed to him in the battle of Meeanee amounted to somewhere about 23,000 men, while his own force did not exceed 2,800. I have, however, reason to believe, that he overrated the amount of the force under his command, and underrated that of the force opposed to him. I believe it would be more consistent with the truth, were I to say, that the number of British troops under his command at the battle of Meeanee, did not exceed 2,000, and that the force opposed to him did not fall short of 25,000, the number originally given. Sir, the force of the Ameers consisted of men accustomed to war, of great natural courage, and of desperate resolution, to which full credit is given in the admirable despatch of Sir Charles Napier. That force, originally estimated at 25,000 men, occupied a very formidable position. They were posted in the dried bed of a water-course, which during the inundations of the Indus becomes filled. The enemy were flanked by a village, and by a wooded country, almost impervious to troops. Their position, I believe, was defended by fifteen pieces of artillery; and against this force of 25,000 men so posted, Sir Charles Napier and his army marched, for the purpose of defending their lives, and supporting the honour and credit of their country. At the battle of Hyderabad, the force of Sir Charles Napier had received the addition of two or three regiments; and the British force in that battle amounted to 5,000 men. The force opposed to him, consisted of about 20,000. Of the courage and resolution of the army of the Ameers no greater proof can be given than one adduced from the despatch of Sir Charles Napier,—“That on the approach of the British army the Beloochees did what, as an exhibition of courage, corresponds in European warfare with the actual conflict of the bayonet, the proof of European courage which is the most decisive, that after discharging their firelocks at the troops of Sir Charles Napier, they rushed from the water-course in which they had taken up their position and attacked the British soldiers with their shields and swords, which they took as substitutes for their firelocks.”

Nothing can be more decisive than the testimony of Sir C. Napier to the valour of those who were opposed to him; at the same time, any one who considers the circumstances of the action, the nature of the position, the valour of the enemy, and the disparity of the forces, will admit that the valour of the enemy was rendered vain by the eminent military skill on the part of Sir C. Napier. Sir, in those two battles also, although there was such an immense disparity of force, the valour of the British soldiers fully maintained the character of their country. In the first battle, where the disparity was the greatest, the British force consisted, I think, of only one regiment of Europeans, three regiments of Sepoys, if I remember rightly, the 25th, the 12th, and the 1st, and some native cavalry; and it is, I think, most gratifying to know that there was no distinction in the exhibition of valour, between the Sepoy and the European; animated by the example of their officers, both Sepoy and European were exposed to the common danger, and showed an equal degree of courage and resolution. Sir, to the officers and men employed on that occasion it would be impossible to attribute too high praise; but, at the same time, justice requires that we should not overlook the great cause of the victory. It is, in my opinion, mainly to be ascribed, both at Meeanee and Hyderabad, to the example set by the gallant officer, who was responsible for the British army on those occasions. It is most fortunate that at such a crisis, and under circumstances of such difficulty, the

command of the British army was committed to a man, one of three brothers, who have engrafted on the stem of an ancient and honourable lineage that personal nobility which is derived from unblemished private character, from the highest sense of personal honour, and from repeated proofs of valour in the field, which have made their name conspicuous in the records of their country. Sir, each of these three brothers learnt the art of war under an illustrious commander during the whole of those memorable campaigns of which one of them has been the faithful, impartial and eloquent historian, and the exploits of those three brothers during the whole of those campaigns entitled them to the gratitude of their country. In almost every action of the Peninsular war they gave proofs of great military skill and personal valour. In the actions of Corunna, of Busaco, of Ciudad Rodrigo, and during the operations of the Pyrenees, they proved that there was no British officer more prodigal of his blood in the cause of his country than was each of those brothers. Sir, the officer who commanded in the actions to which this notice refers, bears a name than which there is none more conspicuous in the bright pages which contain the records, whether in the military or the naval annals of this country, for desperate and successful valour. For if we read the account of some naval action, in which, in the course of five minutes, with a force wholly unable, unless directed with the utmost skill and valour, to compete with the enemy—if in the course of five minutes we find a signal victory achieved, by which the glories of St. Vincent are revived—a victory by the moral effect of which a dynasty is changed,—if we read the records of such an action, we find the name of the commander there is Napier. Even in a more limited and circumscribed sphere of operation, when, in the course of last year, it became of the utmost importance to impress on a misguided multitude the inherent strength of the law and the civil power directed by a consciousness of right, and by consummate skill, the man who, accompanied by only six constables, attacked hundreds of people, and captured more of those opposed to him than the number of the men he commanded—I remark, with satisfaction, that the person who achieved that, comparatively speaking, humble and yet most useful exploit, also bore the name of Napier. I am justified then in saying, that in the records of gallant exploits, whether civil, military, or naval, there is not one name which stands out more conspicuously than the name borne by the gallant officer who commanded at Meeanee and Hyderabad. And, Sir, I believe that those who bear that name, stimulated by the examples of their predecessors, will continue to exhibit the same courage and resolution in great actions, and that the motto which they bear on their shields, “Ready, ay, ready,” will be as it is, their motto, so also the characteristic of their conduct. Let the House recollect that when Sir Charles Napier was called on to take the command of the forces in Scinde he had attained the age of sixty-two, and that his body had been shattered in the service of his country; and yet it is to his spirit—to the example which he set the troops—inspiring an unparalleled confidence in their commander, that we must mainly attribute the success of the actions of Meeanee and Hyderabad. The quality of actions, Sir, chiefly depends on the character of those who superintend them. The actions which have been performed by the members of the Napier family may appear foolhardy to the pusillanimous—they may appear the mere result of a lucky chance to the superficial; but however desperate they may appear when they are undertaken and superintended by ordinary minds, they are, nevertheless, reconcileable with the soberest calculations of prudence when directed by such men as Sir Charles Napier. Sir, there is one point I am desirous of adverting to, because I know if rashness could be imputed to Sir Charles Napier—if it could be imputed to him that he had needlessly led the British army into the conflict—no praise which we could bestow on his valour would compensate him for the painful reflections which such an imputation would give birth to in his mind. I think it is impossible for any one to peruse the papers relating to this question without coming to the conclusion that not only was that the wisest course which Sir Charles Napier could take—namely, that of at once encountering the enemy, but that if he had pursued any other course, the safety of the army would have been compromised. It is difficult to speculate as to what might have been the results if a different course had been taken; but if any man could entertain a doubt as to the policy of the course which Sir Charles Napier took in not suspending his march, in not permitting the Ameers to congregate, and in determining at once to

bring his force of 2,500 men into conflict with a force of eight times the number, he would only ask such a man to read the account of what passed in the year 1839, at the time when Sir John Keane arrived from Bombay at the mouth of the Indus. Do not speculate on what the Ameers would have done in 1843, if Sir Charles Napier had delayed his march or withdrawn his troops, but read the testimonies of what their conduct was in 1839, and I think you will say that Sir Charles Napier had no alternative but at once to front the danger which menaced him. In 1839, Lord Auckland having determined on advancing into Affghanistan, he sent a force from Bombay, under the command of Sir John Keane, for the purpose of entering upon some negotiations with the Ameers, and of making Scinde the basis of his military operations. Lord Auckland, in describing the operations of Sir John Keane, gave this account of the conduct and attentions of the Ameers:—"The Bombay division, under the command of Sir John Keane, landed at the Hujamsee mouth of the Indus in the early days of December, and Lord Auckland, writing in March, 1839, says:—"No resistance was offered to its disembarkations, but from the date of its arrival every artifice was resorted to, to thwart and impede its movements, notwithstanding the most fulsome professions of friendship and devotion."

They (the Ameers), says Lord Auckland, professed the utmost devotion, yet he says that they were at the same moment "making every preparation for hostilities, and that they endeavoured to see what good they could derive from a system of feigned confidence and violent menace." The Ameers then took with respect to Sir John Keane the same course which they afterwards took with respect to Sir Charles Napier:—"Communications," Lord Auckland continued, "were cut off—letters seized—boatmen and other workpeople threatened—and every appearance of intended open hostility exhibited."

On the 24th January, 1839, Sir John Keane writes—"I have in former communications stated to you that Scinde has all along been considered a light affair, as it might be called a secondary consideration; as relating to the campaign, so near as I can judge at this hour, it assumes a different aspect, and takes a first place in the operations of the army."

Again, immediately after he writes:—"Things have come to a crisis in Lower Scinde; the gentlemen of the residency have been obliged to leave Hyderabad, and are now in my camp."

I ask you also, continued the right hon. baronet, to read the account which Lieut. Eastwick gives of the menaces directed against him. There is no saying what the consequences might have been if he had remained at Hyderabad. He retired, and if he had not been prudent enough to retire, he would have been exposed to the same attacks as that gallant officer, Major Outram, was afterwards subjected to. Lieut. Eastwick in his account of the negotiations, states, that "On the 20th January, the treaty was given to the Ameers; on the 21st January, the Ameers desired the meeting should be postponed to the 22nd. On the 22nd the Ameers said they could not on that day give an explicit answer; they would not say whether they would accept the treaty or not. On the 23rd hordes of troops surrounded the city, and the reply of the Ameers was that the treaty should be sent back, for that they would not sign."

The proceedings of the Ameers, in 1839, were exactly similar to those of 1843. They made fulsome professions of friendship and devotion—they asked you to postpone the negotiations from day to day—they pretended to wish for further time for consideration, but every hour they were collecting their forces. At their request four days were allowed to elapse. When their preparations were completed, what was their answer? "The treaty could not now be signed—the embassy might go or stay as they pleased, but they (the Ameers) could give them no pledge of safety, having no control over the Beloochees."

So Sir John Keane says:—"The whole country in front and in rear of us is now aroused and under arms to exterminate us if they can. Troops are flocking in from all directions to the capital. Let a brigade of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and a troop of horse artillery, be sent down as soon as possible."

Why did not the Ameers attack the British army? "Because Sir Willoughby Cotton having received authentic intelligence of the immediate hazard of a rupture in Lower Scinde, marched two brigades of infantry, one brigade of cavalry, and a

large force of artillery, down to the east bank of the Indus in the direction of Hyderabad. The troops of Shah Shoojah had been sent to occupy Sukanna, a town from which the Beloochee soldiery had been drafted to support the Ameers of Hyderabad."

Sir John Keane, who was on the opposite bank, wished to take that course which Sir Charles Napier afterwards took, of making an attack at once. On the 30th of January, Sir Henry Pottinger, finding himself supported by such a force, told the Ameers he could now make no abatement in the terms which had been proffered; but if they still refused, if a gun or a matchlock were fired, their whole country would be seized, and that they themselves would be dispossessed of power. When the Ameers found that four or five brigades of British troops were close upon them, they signified, on the 1st of February, their readiness to submit to terms. If, however, there had then been only a force of 2,000 or 2,500 men, depend upon it the Ameers, notwithstanding their professions of friendship, would have attacked our troops. Sir Charles Napier was not in the condition in which Sir John Keane and Sir Willoughby Cotton were. He had not 8,000 or 10,000 men under his command, but only a limited force of 2,500 men to oppose to the forces of the Ameers. My opinion is, that if he had delayed one day longer; if he had attempted to retreat; if he had not taken that course which his wisdom combined with his skill had dictated him to take, not one day would have passed without his army being attacked and cut off; and though the glory of the British arms would not have been tarnished by such a result, still following upon the disaster which occurred to us at Cabul, it would have produced the most serious consequences. In estimating the conduct of Sir Charles Napier, I do not think the chief praise is due to his military skill—I do not think it is due even to his personal valour; but I do think it is due to him for the course which he took and his opposition to those who advised a postponement of hostilities, in at once engaging the enemy. Having pondered on the consequences of retreat—knowing the shock which our Indian empire would sustain by a repetition of a disaster like that of Cabul—he, on his own responsibility, with less local knowledge than was possessed by many around him, had the moral courage to act in opposition to the advice he received, and committed that army and his own reputation to the fate of doubtful war. It is chiefly for that exhibition of moral courage that I think him entitled to the thanks of the House. In detailing the action of Meeanee, Sir Charles Napier writes as follows:—"At one time, my lord, the courage and numbers of the enemy against the 22nd, 25th, and 12th regiments bore heavily in that part of the battle. There was no time to be lost, and I sent orders to the cavalry to force the right of the enemy's line. This order was very gallantly executed by the 9th Bengal cavalry and Scinde horse; the details shall be afterwards stated, for the struggle on our right and centre was at that time so fierce that I could not go to the left."

That is the modest and becoming account of the reasons which prevented him from going to the left. He remained at the post of danger, feeling that the time was come when, whatever might be the consequences of his fall, the necessity for an example of personal devotion upon his part, by coming and sharing in the common danger, was so great that he could not retire from his position, and he was thus obliged to collect from others an account which he himself could not give. And there did that gallant man stand, I believe within ten or fifteen yards of the water-course where lay the whole force of the enemy, cheering on his troops by an example of personal valour, which made it impossible for any man in that army to resist its contagious influence, but compelled them all, like their gallant commander, to devote their lives to the service of their country. Sir, I think it is unnecessary for me to trouble the House with further details. I am asking them to place upon record their sense of the military services of the army in Scinde and of its commander. I call upon them for no expression of opinion upon any other point connected with the operations in that country. But looking to what was achieved by them, looking to what was done by every man in that army on those two days, I think the House will be disposed to come to a unanimous resolution that for such exploits the thanks of this House are justly due. With respect to some who were engaged in those battles, we must mingle with the expression of our gratitude to them an expression of deep sympathy with their relatives and friends. The dispatches of Sir Charles Napier wisely and justly ascribe to individuals who fell



on those occasions much of the merit of the victories that have been gained. He has left, I believe, an imperishable record of the exploits which they performed. It is almost impossible to lament deaths so glorious as some which took place in the course of those engagements. He speaks of one gallant officer in a manner which must, I think, if any thing can, give consolation to his family and friends, and prove to them the highest consolation that could be offered to them under their affliction and distress. He says:—"I have deeply to regret the loss of the brave and excellent Captain Garrett, of the 9th light cavalry, who fell honourably in the battle, and also the fall of Lieutenant Smith of the Bombay Artillery; with unsurpassed and desperate valour he galloped in front of his battery, and rode up upon the top of the nullah (filled with enemies) to see where his guns could bear with the greatest effect. Here the hero fell."

Sir, there can be no nobler inscription upon the tomb of that gallant officer than the words in which his commander has thus commemorated his services. Sir, with regard to these gallant men, I trust we shall now proceed to bestow upon them that highest reward, which a grateful country can confer—that reward, of which it has with truth been said—

"The Senate's thanks, the *Gazette's* pompous tale  
With force resistless o'er the brave prevail."

That we shall allow you, Sir, as the organ of the nation's voice, to express to Sir Charles Napier, and to the officers and the men who served under his command—to the European and to the Sepoy—to the man of the highest and of the lowest rank, and who shared in those days a common fate and are invested with a common glory—that to them all we shall convey through you, Sir, as our organ, the acknowledgment of the public gratitude. The right hon. baronet concluded by moving—"That the thanks of this House be given to Major-general Sir Charles Napier, Knight grand cross of the most honourable order of the Bath, for the eminent skill, energy, and gallantry displayed by him in the recent military operations in Scinde, particularly in the two decisive battles of Meeanee and Hyderabad."

Lord John Russell briefly seconded the motion, which was agreed to.

## STATE OF IRELAND.

FEBRUARY 23, 1844.

On the ninth night's debate on Lord John Russell's motion, "That the House do resolve itself into a committee, to take into consideration the state of Ireland"—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows:—Sir, I should be appalled by the duty which I have to perform, if I had not great confidence in the justice, and still greater confidence in the indulgence of this House. The House, I am sure, will consider that on now rising, at the close of the ninth night's debate, to address them, I am not rising for the purpose of gratifying any personal wish of my own, or for any purpose of idle display; but I rise in the performance of my public duty towards the House and towards the government, which imposes on me, considering the situation in which I stand, the obligation of addressing the House. I know, Sir, that in a debate, conducted on both sides with extraordinary ability, and carried on through such a long period of time, every argument that could be brought to bear upon the question before us must be exhausted; and I know likewise that, under such circumstances, it is next to impossible to offer any novel observations to the House; but yet I have no other alternative than in the discharge of my duty, to present in a connected and intelligible form my opinions and views on the several matters which have been brought forward. I cannot do that effectually without travelling over a field which has already been exhausted. I must, therefore, appeal to the patience and indulgence of the House to bear with me while I perform that duty. I have another and a greater duty—I have to exercise that privilege which belongs to the accused. On the part of the government I stand here to make our defence. I am naturally influenced by the feeling of a consciousness of having been exposed to unjust and unmerited im-

putations. I must exercise that privilege of defence—the liberty of giving vent to that feeling; yet I will not permit that feeling to be mixed up with the consideration of important matters of policy affecting the interests of Ireland; and on all that part of the question which relates to public policy—the question of future legislation—I trust, I shall address myself to it with that care, moderation, and forbearance which becomes a subject of such immense magnitude. In replying to the many charges brought against me, I hope I shall not forget that reserve respecting all matters of a personal nature, affecting the position of those gentlemen who have been the subject of criminal proceedings, which should be maintained. If I transgress the rule which I lay down, it will be contrary to my intention, as I wish to conduct the defence of the government with a perfect recollection of the position of the hon. gentleman who spoke last. I wish the hon. gentleman, instead daily of agitating the passions of his countrymen on the subject of repeal, would give us here an opportunity of meeting him and replying to his arguments, and I should not doubt as to what would be the result. I beg you to bear in mind what were the arguments and statements on which the hon. gentleman has this night rested his appeal for the repeal of the union. What a perversion of history is necessary to vindicate his demands for what he calls justice to Ireland! The hon. and learned gentleman said, that for eighteen years anterior to the union, Ireland had the happiness of enjoying an independent parliament. An independent parliament! What! the parliament that sat from 1782 to 1800 an independent parliament, providing for the social happiness of those for whose interests they legislated! Why, I thought one of the gravest allegations of the hon. and learned gentleman was, that through the corruption of that parliament the union had been effected, and that the rights and liberties of the people of Ireland had been sacrificed through the corruption of that parliament. And was the condition of the people really happy under that parliament? What said Mr. Grattan? He asked after 1782—long after, if I recollect rightly—“What has the independent legislature effected for us?” He said, “We have got a police bill, we have a riot act, we have got pensions without end, we have a privileged traffic in the sale of peerages.” That was Mr. Grattan’s account of the virtue of that independent parliament. He said, in fact, that Ireland was reduced to the condition of a province; and is it true that the condition of the people of Ireland was happy? Look at the statements presented of the condition of the city of Dublin and other cities from 1795; and look at the accounts of the trade of Ireland; look at the diminution of trade and the shipping interests for the ten years preceding the union, and you will see whether the hon. and learned gentleman proved his statement that Ireland was in a state of advancing prosperity. Was the condition of the people happy—was their social state perfect—was Ireland governed without insurrectionary acts, or other acts against the liberty of the people? Talk of the state of Ireland between 1783 and 1800—why, the rebellion and all the terrible consequences of it occurred during that period. The rebellion broke out in 1798, and was but just suppressed at the time of the union. But if this Irish parliament did as greatly conduce to the happiness of Ireland, as the hon. and learned gentleman has stated, how, I ask, was it constituted? If the hon. and learned gentleman’s statement was true, how completely did it show that that happiness is entirely independent of, and unconnected with the social institutions of its government. For at any rate the hon. and learned gentleman cannot deny this, that that parliament which he now says promoted the happiness and prosperity of the people of Ireland, was a parliament returned by small boroughs; that that parliament was composed exclusively of Protestants; that during that whole period, at any rate, there was the Established Protestant Church. Yes, during that period, when the hon. and learned gentleman says the social state of Ireland was almost perfect, the Roman Catholics were subject to disabilities, the parliament was exclusively Protestant, and the Established Church was in its full efficiency. I leave therefore the hon. and learned member the choice either of admitting that it is consistent with the interests of Ireland that the Established Church should be preserved, and even that the civil disabilities of the Roman Catholics should have remained in force; or he must admit to me, which is the real fact, that you only carried on the government of Ireland with the parliament which existed from 1782 to 1800, through the instrumentality of corruption and venality. But history proves that the social

condition of Ireland was not a happy one, and that that parliament did not promote, and was not calculated to promote, the peace and welfare of Ireland. The hon. and learned gentleman must also admit to me, if there be truth in history, that there never existed a legislature less entitled to the character of independence, in any sense of the term, than the parliament which he now says was the pride and boast of Ireland, and had contributed more to its happiness and prosperity than any other institution. I think the hon. and learned gentleman would better consult the interests of his country, and take a course more corresponding with his own permanent fame, if he would give us the opportunity here of examining his statements, and of encountering his arguments, instead of inflaming the passions of the ignorant by misstatements like these. We may judge what the nature of those misstatements of the hon. and learned gentleman must be on such an audience by those he has ventured to make in the face of a British parliament. Having reluctantly been diverted from the consideration of the motion of the noble lord by the new topics introduced by the hon. and learned gentleman, I now pass from them, and proceed to address myself to the merits of that motion. With respect to the motion itself, I think the noble lord will admit to me that it is a motion exclusively—I won't say exclusively—but one deserving strictly the name of party motion. It is a perfectly legitimate motion, and one in conformity with ancient precedent, and a perfectly constitutional mode of trying the confidence of the House in the government. That it is a party motion the noble lord, I think, will admit himself. It is not a motion for inquiry into the state of Ireland. The noble lord might have pursued this course. He might have said, "I won't mix up the considerations of party with the higher consideration of the government of Ireland. I will challenge your conduct. I will put you upon your defence; but I will support my charge against you, not from party considerations, but for the more important consideration of the social state of Ireland." But the noble lord has not taken that course. Has the noble lord moved for a committee on the whole state of Ireland? No such thing. But as if he were afraid of the possibility of success; as if he shrunk from the risk of being compelled in that committee to explain in details what were his own views with respect to the policy to be pursued in Ireland, at the moment he gives his notice he publicly declares—"I mean to move a resolution strongly condemnatory of the conduct of the government, and I will make it impossible for the government, consistently with their own honour and character, to acquiesce in my motion, and will force them into a declaration of policy that shall render it impossible for them to govern Ireland." Not so the noble member for Sunderland. His speech expressed strong opinions, from which, however I may differ, I will say I am sure are sincere. I never was more convinced in my life, from the tone and manner of the noble lord, that the opinions he submitted to the House, without any regard to the consequences, were his real opinions. But I think that the speech of the noble lord, the member for London, was quite of a different character. He was in a difficult position. He was solving a great question in political fluxions, and undoubtedly he did come to the solution of it like a great mathematician. He had to reconcile the maximum of crimination against the government with the minimum of inconvenience to his supporters. *Quod erat demonstrandum*. Now, the only thing I can extract from the noble lord's speech is this sentiment—"Remove the present government, and place me in office." He dealt plentifully in impeachments and accusations against us, but when he came to explain his own views with respect to Ireland, and the policy to be pursued in that country, he said nothing whatever which could compel him when in office to adopt any course different from that of the present government. Did the noble lord say, "If I could realize my own wishes I would divide the funds of the Church Establishment in Ireland, and give one portion to the Roman Catholics, another to the Presbyterians, and a third part to the Protestants?" Did he say, "These are great projects, but I fear that at present the prospect of consummating them is most remote? I see no chance of its arriving for a considerable period, but I will make some progress to meet it; and I think the first step towards it is doubling the grant to Maynooth?" Should the noble lord succeed through this motion, and be reinstated in power, his success will involve him in less of inconvenience and difficulty with regard to the Church question than any public man was ever in before. I rejoice at this—I rejoice that the noble lord has not committed himself on his return to power to any measure which may very materially

endanger the support of the Established Church. With respect to the accusations of the noble lord against the government, allow me to say, that I think it would have been better for him to have abstained from attacking us in such an acrimonious way as he did. I think, considering the exposed position of the house in which the noble lord lives, and looking to the very brittle materials of which it is composed—with a Coercion act and an appropriation clause—I think, I say, that the noble lord might have been far less dangerously employed than in throwing stones at us. I do not mean, however, to follow that example, I will ward off the blows of the noble lord as I can; but I will not disturb the temper of calmness and moderation in which I wish to consider the affairs of Ireland by seeking any opportunity for recrimination. The first charge made against us is a very serious and a very unjust one, which I scarcely expected would have come from the noble lord. It was to the effect that the government, that is, I, who, as the head of it, am mainly responsible for its acts, had selected the present lord chancellor on account of his hostility to the Irish people. The noble lord denied his talents. [No, no.] The noble lord certainly denied that the lord chancellor efficiently discharged his duties. He asserted that the appointment should not have been made, and undertaking to answer not only for the conduct but the very motives of other men, had declared his opinion that I had selected Lord Lyndhurst for the chancellorship because of his enmity to Ireland—nay, worse still, on account of his offensive language to the people of that country. The noble lord absolutely asserted, that I had so far disgraced myself as to have selected for the highest office in the law courts of the empire a man whose qualifications for that situation consisted in enmity and the use of offensive language to the Irish people. I am sure that escaped the noble lord in the heat of debate, and I ask him in his cooler moments whether he does not think that this is an accusation which he had no right to prefer except upon some stronger evidence than mere suspicion? I have been in the administration of affairs twice before—now, three times, and in every instance have been connected with Lord Lyndhurst. In 1829 Lord Lyndhurst held the office of lord chancellor. In the short administration of 1835 he held the same important post. In 1841 I was called upon by her Majesty to form an administration: and the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) thinks that it would have been just that I should have said to Lord Lyndhurst, “True, I have twice been connected with you in office; true I was associated with you at that critical time when the Roman Catholic Disabilities were removed; true, I asked for your assistance and influence in mitigating the objections of the House of Lords, and I received your cordial support; but you have used some hasty expressions at which offence has been taken, and I must now exclude you from office, and make you the sacrifice in order that I may court popularity in Ireland.” Lord Lyndhurst would have replied to me—“I deny the use of any such expressions. In the face of the House of Lords I have denied them. When I used them they were not challenged. A fortnight afterwards I was taunted with them by those who had heard them at the time, and this was my reply”—This was the language which Lord Lyndhurst used—“Now as to the charge itself, what is it? It is this—that I stated, as a reason for not granting municipal institutions to the Irish people, that they were aliens by descent—that they speak a different language, and that they have different habits from ours—that they considered us to be invaders of their soil, and that they were desirous of removing us from their country.”

That was the charge. Lord Lyndhurst's answer was—“I made no such statement, nor did I say any thing at all resembling it. No expression ever fell from me upon which any person not of weak intellect, or not disposed to misunderstand or misrepresent what I stated, could have put such a construction. The noble marquis (referring to the Marquis of Lansdowne) referred to these words, regretting that I had used them, and hoping that I should explain them. I replied that I had nothing to explain, and that I would satisfy your lordships that I had never made the statement.”

That hasty expressions should have been thus construed, no one can regret more than myself, except Lord Lyndhurst; but would it have been fair when he had explained the offensive interpretation put upon them, if, six years after, I had said to my noble friend, “I cannot advise the Crown to appoint you, in consideration of some hasty expressions in debate made use of by you six years ago?” When I look

at men like Lord Lyndhurst, who have raised themselves from the position in society in which they were born to the occupation of the highest office of the State—when I look to the manner in which the office of lord chancellor has been filled within the last eight or ten years—when I see that it has been occupied by such men as Lord Eldon, Lord Brougham, Lord Lyndhurst, Lord Plunket, and Sir Edward Sugden—when I recollect the origin of such men, and their elevation by the force of merit from comparative obscurity to the highest civil station next the Throne—this is, I conceive, the proudest homage to the democratic principle of the British constitution. It affords the strongest practical contradiction to the remark of the Roman satirist—

“ Haud facile emergunt quorum virtutibus obstat  
Res angusta domi.”

In this country, the *res angusta domi* has been no impediment to the elevation of men of talent, who, by the force of their own energy and character, have raised themselves to the highest stations in the empire. I had difficulties to encounter, which I knew the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) had not to deal with, in overlooking the claims of candidates for the appointment of lord chancellor. The noble lord has exhibited examples of resolution and virtue in respect of that office of chancellor which, since the *atrox animus Catonis*, have hardly been equalled. It was, I know, in the noble lord, virtue, and no meaner motive. The noble lord had the good fortune to be connected with a man who had long been a faithful friend of the Whig party, the pride of the bar of Ireland, the ornament of the British Senate, the friend of Grattan. He had the happiness of being connected with Lord Plunket, whose name will go down to remote posterity, as one of the brightest stars that shine in the constellation of Irish eminence. Lord Plunket was the son of a Presbyterian minister: he raised himself in his own country to the rank of chancellor, and the Irish bar rejoiced in his elevation. The noble lord opposite thinks it necessary to consult the prejudices and feelings of the Irish people; he taunts us with overlooking Irish claims—with making English appointments. The noble lord had a chancellor, the most eminent man the bar of Ireland ever produced; and six weeks before the noble lord quitted office he, so sensitive to Irish feelings—he, so jealous of offence offered to Ireland—he, so jealous of the preference of Englishmen—he, having that man as chancellor, whose connection with his ministry was the pride and boast of the Whig party—he signified to that Irishman, to Lord Plunket, to that chancellor, that it was expedient for him to retire. And for what—so far at least as the public is apprised? In order that he might gratify the vanity of, certainly an eminent and distinguished lawyer, of whom I wish to speak with the respect that I feel for him—but, in order to gratify the vanity of a Scotchman. In order to gratify that noble and learned individual with a six weeks' tenure of office, the people of Ireland were subjected to an affront which, whatever the noble lord may think of my disposition towards that country, I declare, if I had offered them, I should have been unworthy to have retained office for a single hour. The noble lord quitted this question relating to Lord Lyndhurst, and what was the next topic to which the noble lord referred? The noble lord, the representative of a great party, when expatiating on the wrongs of Ireland, thought right to occupy his time in raking in the kennels for the refuse of election dinners; and the noble lord quoted a speech which was made at the Canterbury election, in order that he might charge me with participation and adoption of the sentiments there expressed. Why, this would be a hard rule for public men. It is hard to make me responsible for expressions either used by, or attributed to Mr. Bradshaw, the member for Canterbury. The noble lord is followed by a powerful party, confederated with him in promoting political objects, who will vote to-night, naturally and justifiably, with him for the purpose of removing us from office, and replacing us by the noble lord. But the noble lord would think it exceedingly unjust if I imputed to him any sentiment that may have been uttered by one of his supporters at a dinner or at a meeting. Whether the noble lord disavowed the sentiment or not, he would say,—“ It is unjust of you to ransack the records of anti-Corn-law meetings, picking out some violent or offensive expressions, charging landlords with cold-blooded insensibility to the distresses of the country, and then saying, that because I vote on the same side with the persons who used them, and

may be united with them in general political sentiments, you will therefore make me individually responsible for their language." But suppose I had always disclaimed the sentiments which the noble lord imputes to my hon. friend—suppose I had said, "I will not countenance these prejudices"—suppose I had declared, as well in opposition as in government, "I approve the appointment of Catholics to office; I think the right hon. gentleman (Mr. M. O'Ferrall), at one time the secretary to the admiralty, and afterwards secretary to the treasury, was entitled to the place he occupied; I make no objection to the appointment of Mr. Wyse; I think the Roman Catholic relief bill has removed their disabilities, and I conceive that the government was justified in their appointment;"—suppose I had said this, as I did say it, in public, would it not be unjust on the part of the noble lord to say to me—"I make you responsible for what passed at the dinner at Canterbury?" I do not carry the doctrine of conspiracy quite so far as the noble lord seems disposed to do. Here is the noble lord protesting against the injustice of making one man responsible for the acts of another, and yet he says—"It is convenient for party purposes that I should make you responsible for an election speech delivered at Canterbury." Sir, I consider this to be a most important matter, on account of the use the noble lord makes of it. Says the noble lord—"These are the men entertaining those feelings with respect to Roman Catholics. These are those men,"—speaking of the government—"offering to you, their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, those insults; speaking in that language of your ministers of religion." Then the noble lord says,—"Will any Roman Catholic of honour and spirit consent to receive favours from such a government?" Sir, what the noble lord wants to do is this; he wants to make it impossible for a Roman Catholic to accept favour from the present government and then to turn round upon the government and say, "Why, how unequally and unjustly you distribute your patronage: here are twenty Protestants and not one Roman Catholic." Is that just? First to create an impediment by raising unjust prejudices against us, founded upon unjust accusations, and then to make it a charge against us, when you have succeeded in deterring Roman Catholics from accepting favour, that we are guilty of having withheld favour from them. Sir, I have often said in this House publicly, what my opinions were on the subject of the position of Roman Catholics, and I am taunted, and it is said, "Yes, these are fine declarations you make in debate, but you don't practically adopt them." Allow me to say, and I say it with perfect frankness, that the subject is one of great difficulty. I recognize that where there are equal qualifications, there ought to be no practical disabilities. I say this with respect to every office. I care not what prejudice I may create against me: and I say now, in the possession of power, what I said when I was not in office, that with respect to the judicial office, with respect to the privy council, to every office there ought to be no impediment whatever to the appointment of a Roman Catholic, upon the ground of his religious opinions. Sir, since parliament last met, there has been one, and I think only one office of a judicial nature vacant in Ireland; it was an office in the ecclesiastical court; I apprehend no one will contend that any body but a member of the Church of England ought to have been appointed to that situation. The appointment was placed at my disposal by the lord primate. I determined to place in that situation the most eminent man at the bar of Ireland, with reference to professional attainments and nothing else; and I think it will be admitted that I did so, when I appointed Mr. Sergeant Keating to that situation. Mr. Sergeant Keating vacated the office of third Sergeant, which it was necessary to fill. A communication took place between the government of England and the government of Ireland upon the subject of that appointment. And now, as I want to destroy those prejudices which the noble lord is trying to create—to show to the Roman Catholics that I don't participate in the opinions delivered at election dinners—and to show them that I am not delivering these sentiments upon the impulse of the moment in debate, I shall take the liberty of reading to them, unjustly accused as I am, the letter which I addressed to the Lord-lieutenant, on the subject of that appointment, addressed be it observed, not now under the pressure of debate, but in the course of last year. It is dated August 22, 1843, and is as follows:—"I admit that political considerations would not justify a bad appointment of any kind, still less a bad judicial appointment; but I must, on the other hand, express my strong opinion that considerations of policy, and also of justice, demand a liberal and in-

dulgent estimate of the claims to the favour of the Crown, of such Roman Catholics as abstain from political agitation, and take no part in politics offensive to the dispensers of that patronage. What is the advantage to Roman Catholics of having removed their legal disabilities, if, some how or other, they are constantly met by a preferable claim on the part of Protestants, and if they do not practically reap the advantage of their nominal equality as to civil rights?"

I can with truth say I wrote this letter with reference to the appointment then vacant, and without reference to this debate. The letter continues—"I can readily believe that for nearly every office that may become vacant for ten years to come, there may be found a Protestant candidate with at least equal claims in point of qualifications, and superior on account of professed attachment to the church. If that claim is always to be admitted, there is still a practical disqualification; and what motive can we hold out to Roman Catholics to abjure agitation and the notoriety and fame which are its reward, if honourable appointments, and legitimate distinctions, be in fact withheld from them? I fear they will not be satisfied with the answer, 'True it is we have made fifty appointments, but for every one a Protestant had a preferable claim.' Why have Protestants a preferable claim? Because they have had for a long series of years the advantage of a monopoly of privileges secured to them by law, and have been thrown in constant contact and intercourse with the government. The policy of the law has been changed, and surely we ought not to allow the effects of the preceding policy to remain in full force, and ought not to plead the inferiority of the Roman Catholic as a conclusive reason for preferring his more fortunate opponent."

I have read that letter as indicative of the spirit with which the government was anxious to treat Roman Catholics. The result was, that Mr. Sergeant Howley was appointed. I have not the slightest doubt, had there been a wish to exclude a Roman Catholic from the appointment, that it would have been easy to have found men of at least equal professional abilities in the four courts. But Mr. Sergeant Howley, a Roman Catholic, was appointed. Now, just to show the spirit that actuates that system of declining every appointment when we do make it—of trying to persuade Roman Catholics into a refusal, in order that you may found a claim for your own rise to political power—I will read what was the impression sought to be raised by your party organs. Hear what this paper, the organ of gentlemen opposite, hear what it says upon making the announcement of a Roman Catholic appointment by a conservative government. ["Name."] Oh, this is the *Morning Chronicle*. We are often made liable for indiscreet expressions in other papers over which we have no control, and I think it is quite fair that I should quote from this. Well, it says—"The present government have, during their career of office, made many bad and some absurd appointments; but we do not remember any one so curiously infelicitous as their last legal promotion in Ireland. The dignity of Sergeant-at-law is one of much more importance in Ireland than it is in this country. The Irish Sergeants, three in number, act from time to time as Judges of assize, and the coif is generally regarded as a preparation for the ermine."

It goes on—"How this extraordinary appointment came to be made is a question which has produced no little speculation. The explanation, however, does not seem very difficult; it is only necessary to suppose a little shallow cunning and a large share of blockheadism on the part of the government, and the whole matter will be accounted for."

That's the encouragement they give us. Then,—“Whatever motive may have dictated the selection of Mr. Howley, the result has been most damaging to the government. The exasperation of the Irish Tories was, of course, expected.”

Yes; but they give us no credit for that. “But it was not anticipated that the Liberal members of the bar would regard Mr. Howley's elevation as an insult, and take pains to disclaim him as a political friend. It is quite clear that Sir Robert Peel's government cannot govern Ireland.”

Now, what is the truth with respect to this Mr. Howley, totally unconnected with us in politics, whom we never saw, of whom we never heard, except from the respect attaching to his name, who had the manliness and courage, notwithstanding the denunciations of the noble lord and his party organs, to receive the proffered advancement from a conservative government? What took place on his appoint-

ment which was said to be an insult to the bar of Ireland? As soon as his appointment was known, from the county in which he had acted as a Judge most honourable testimonials to his conduct, ability, and integrity, were received, and more honourable testimonials were never received by any man. Here is an address to Mr. Sergeant Howley, the man whose appointment is an insult to the people of Ireland, and whose appointment proves that the present government is not fit to govern Ireland. To Mr. Sergeant Howley was presented this address from the magistrates of the county of Tipperary. They say:—"It is with heartfelt pleasure we take this opportunity of expressing the deep sense of the gratitude we feel to be justly due to you from all classes of the community in this county, for the admirable manner in which you have for so many years administered the duties of the arduous office of assistant barrister."

That address is signed by no less than 105 magistrates, all coming forward to bear testimony to the integrity and ability with which Mr. Howley had discharged his functions. There is also an address to him from the grand jury, and an address to him from every practising solicitor in the county of Tipperary. Is this then fair warfare to the government? It may be fair towards us, but is it fair to the individual? Is it fair to the character of an honourable man, so soon as we give him the proper reward of professional merit, to turn round upon him and injure his character, and depreciate his merit, in order that through him you may strike a blow at the conservative government? Sir, I think that is an answer to the attempt of the noble lord to involve me in the responsibility of expressions hostile to the Catholics, used by gentlemen with whom I may be joined in party politics. And now as to the disposition to encourage offensive or hostile expressions used to the Roman Catholic body. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Sheil) made an appeal to me last night on that subject. He referred to an address of a protestant operative association in Dublin presented to my noble friend the Lord-lieutenant, and asked me if I approved of the expressions and sentiments it contained, offensive to the Roman Catholics, and he read an answer of my noble friend to that address. He did not state that that answer referred merely to the approbation expressed in the address, of the conduct of my noble friend. [Mr. Sheil: I read it all.] Yes; but the right hon. gentleman dropped his voice after he had read the words "warm acknowledgments," which were followed by a loud cheer, that prevented the rest of the passage being heard. It very often happens, that when a public man receives in the press of business one of these very long controversial addresses, he does not read them all, and a common official answer is returned; and is an answer of that kind to be brought forward against him in the House of Commons as the written answer of a man who approves of expressions offensive to Roman Catholics. I am sure the House will allow me to do myself and the government justice on this part of the charge preferred against us. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Sheil) referred to me; and I have had memorials addressed to me, to the same effect, from Protestant operative associations. I had one before the agitation begun, addressed to me in the year 1842. It was from the Cork Protestant operative association. It began in this manner:—"We, the members of the Protestant operative association of the city of Cork, feel called on by a sense of duty to ourselves, to our country, and to our God, to address ourselves to you on a subject of the first importance, namely, national education."

It then went on—"If the homilies be true (and their authors sealed their truth with their blood, and raised a testimony against error which can never be overthrown), then are the priests of the Romish Church the priests of Anti-Christ—then are they the special instruments of the Devil."

I must state that the climax improves as it proceeds; but I think I have read enough to show what was the tenor of that address. Now, what was my answer? It was sent in December, 1842. This was the answer:—"Sir—I have received your letter accompanying an address to me from the members of the Protestant operative association of the city of Cork. I am sorry that they feel themselves called upon by their duty to their God to express uncharitable sentiments in offensive language."

Have I shewn to the right hon. gentleman what was my feeling on this subject? [Mr. Sheil: I said I was sure this was not your feeling.] Yes; and I am trying to



confirm your opinion. I thought I made them rather a sharp answer. I must in justice say of them they certainly received it in a very becoming manner. It is but justice to them that I should read the way in which they received my rebuke:—“We feel great pleasure in acknowledging the receipt of your letter (really it is a most charitable and becoming answer) in reply to an address of the Cork Protestant operative association. We feel it necessary to make a few observations, which are called for by the manner in which you have expressed yourself towards us: We first offer our warmest thanks for the prompt and gentlemanly manner in which you answered our communication. It was what we expected, and what from your universally known courteous disposition and kind demeanour, even to the humblest individual, we might have anticipated; while the reply itself has not disappointed our expectations.”

Now, Sir, there was an address from the Dublin protestant operative association to her Majesty. [Mr. Sheil: Was that subsequent to your answer?] Yes. This was transmitted to my right hon. friend (Sir J. Graham), with a request that he would lay it before her Majesty. I hold in my hand the answer of my right hon. friend the secretary of state for the home department to that address. I really had better not read it. He says:—“I will not comment on other passages in the address; but I find the expressions ‘millions of factious Irishmen,’ and the general expressions of that address, if not intended to be insulting, are, at any rate, so open to misconstruction, that I cannot be a party to laying the address before her Majesty.”

Now observe, that was in the year 1842; and I do think that these things are indicative of the spirit in which we were desirous of administering the government of Ireland, and that we were content to relinquish support rather than to gain it by fomenting jealousies. Sir, I come now to the conduct of Her Majesty’s government in respect to the recent trials. We took office in September, 1841, and up to March, 1843, there appeared certainly no great dissatisfaction with the manner in which the government was conducted. As I have shown you, we had been desirous of abating religious animosities; we had done what we could to rebuke attempts at offence or insult to the Roman Catholics. You charge us with a desire to govern Ireland by military force. You confound the necessity which has led us to increase the military force in Ireland with our own disposition and wishes. Yes, I want to know who is responsible for the military force in Ireland? I want to know to whom it is owing that our expectations and hopes of presenting reduced Estimates have been defeated? I want to put that fairly before the country—before the intelligent reasoning classes of the community—to make an appeal in this House to impartial men, whether opponents or not. We took office in September, 1841. In March, 1843, so far from having evinced any disposition to govern by military force, we then had a smaller number of regular forces employed in Ireland than there ever had been before, except on one or two occasions. The total number of forces in April, 1841, when the hon. gentlemen opposite were in power, was 14,000 men. On the day on which he took office, the last day of August, 1841, we found the force in Ireland to be 14,843 men. On the last of September, after we were in office, the force was 16,267 men, and in March, 1843, there were 13,900 men; the number in September, 1841, 16,267 men, having been reduced in March, 1843, at the commencement of these troubles, to 13,900. That shows no disposition on our part to govern Ireland by military force. In March, 1843, began this systematic agitation. Was that in consequence of any act of the government? were we charged with any injustice—any undue partiality? No; but my belief is, that it did not suit the purposes of some that the government of Ireland should be successful. It was, therefore, determined to have recourse to agitation. There were also at the time other causes of excitement. The Poor-rate imposed by an act supported by and perfected by the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) began at that time to be levied, and through many parts of Ireland occasioned great dissatisfaction. That act was most unfortunate, for it subjected every occupier, whatever might be the value of his holding, almost without exception to the poor-law. There were thousands of instances in which people in the west of Ireland were called upon to pay a rate—some of three farthings, and some of more. This occasioned great dissatisfaction. It became our duty to remedy, I will not call it the negligence, but the unfortunate mistake made in drawing up that act. [Lord J. Russell: That mistake was adopted by the present government.] Yes; and the noble lord shall hear no more from me on that point.

I shall not endeavour to repay him in the coin he offered to me. Henceforth, there shall be no more recrimination. That act subjected the poorest occupiers to the payment of the rate. Concurrently with that act was a period of great agricultural depression, and there was no part of the United Kingdom where that depression was more severely felt than in Ireland. Concurrently with that depression was the alarm that the new tariff would cause a reduction in prices, and that alarm alienated the minds of many from the government. These things gave great facilities for agitation. The country then was in a peculiar state. There was great agitation and great excitement in the west of Ireland. Great congregations of men assembled in some parishes—not against the government, but against the ecclesiastical claims. In Sligo there were meetings of large bodies of men at the chapel door for the purpose of demanding a reduction of those claims. The people of those districts, and probably of other parts of Ireland, began to feel that the payments to their priest were exceedingly oppressive—at least so they were disposed to represent them—and they took such measures as might be expected from persons in such circumstances. There was, at this time, as I have already said, great distress, and the resistance to the demands of the Romish priesthood becoming formidable, the agitation for the repeal of the Union was set on foot. We deeply regretted that agitation; we did all in our power to discourage it; but when it arose, we lost no time in determining upon the mode of meeting it. There was nothing in the mode that we resolved to adopt which at all laid us open to the charge since brought against us of having encouraged those meetings, or at least of having avoided to discourage them with the view of entrapping eminent men into a violation of the law, and then turning on them, and subjecting them to its penalties. I declare here publicly that that charge is utterly destitute of any foundation. There was one thing on which we determined from the first, and that was not to apply to parliament for any new powers. I declare, after my long experience in public life, there is nothing I deprecate more than an application to parliament for extraordinary powers. I do not think there is any thing that has a greater tendency to impair the real efficacy of the ordinary law, than suddenly to take it into our heads that it will not be efficacious, and listening to some appeal, founded on local alarm, to procure some Bill destructive of the ordinary liberties of the subject, by surpassing the ordinary powers of the law. This I held to be most injudicious; so far from adding to the authority of government, there is nothing more calculated to paralyze a government and weaken authority than a recourse to extraordinary powers. Let the ordinary law be relied upon; for if we get into a habit of listening to such applications, people by-and-bye will not resort to the ordinary law at all to suppress what they think wrong, in the hope of driving the government to extraordinary measures. With such feelings as these, we made up our minds, whatever the risk, to take the chance, relying with confidence upon the inherent vigour of the ordinary law. It is not as a matter of reproach to them, but in justice to ourselves, that I remind the House that our predecessors in office did not pursue this course. There was the same agitation in 1833. The noble lord, in reviewing the conduct of public men, asked that we should begin the consideration of his own, at a very convenient date for himself, namely, in 1835, just at the very time when he formed that compact with Lichfield House. The noble lord says, "I claim the right to review your lives without any restriction;" and the noble lord goes back to the year 1829. The noble lord says, "Look at all your pledges from that time, it is impossible for you to do any thing for Ireland at variance with those pledges; but at the same time," says the noble lord, "let me be exempt from any reference to that part of my life, from the year 1831 to the year 1835. That part of my life," says the noble lord, "must be exempted from your notice." I shall, on my part, beg leave to trace back the noble lord's proceedings somewhat beyond the period he has himself selected as the limit of that zone of his political life to which he wishes to confine us, and refer to some matters occurring between 1831 and 1835. I have observed, that the late government did not feel that reliance upon the ordinary powers of the law upon which we have acted. The House cannot have forgotten that the noble lord was in office during that period, that Lord Althorp was the colleague of the noble lord opposite, and that then an Irish Coercion bill was introduced into this House. You, who tell us, who charge us with having acted with supineness at the beginning, and

unnecessary vigour at the close—you were not content to take the course we have taken, or to rely on the force and operation of the ordinary laws; but you made your demand on parliament for additional powers, and I supported you in your demands, because you, the government, solemnly assured us that to comply with it, was essential to the well-being of the country. I did not try to aggravate your difficulties. I entered into no confederacy with those who were disturbing the peace; and you, the liberal statesmen—you, the devoted, special, exclusive supporters of the rights and happiness of Ireland—proceeded to pass for Ireland what may be safely described as rather a strong enactment. Really, the noble lord must think the House has forgotten all these matters, or he would have somewhat moderated the attacks he has been, right and left, making upon us. That act was an “act for the more effectual suppression of certain local dangerous disturbances in Ireland.” To suppress such disturbances, the noble lord—the friend of Ireland—thought it essential to have recourse to extraordinary powers. For my own part, I think the bolder course would have been for the noble lord to rely on the ordinary law. The act is, as will be seen, a very strict act of parliament. The Preamble runs thus:—“And whereas divers meetings and assemblies inconsistent with the public peace and safety, and with the exercise of regular government, have for some time past been held in Ireland; and whereas the laws now in force in that part of the United Kingdom have been found inadequate to the prompt and effectual suppression of the said mischiefs, and the interposition of parliament is necessary for the purpose of checking the further progress of the same.”

And then the act went on to subject all persons committing delinquencies under the act to be tried by a court-martial, consisting of not less than five officers. And as to signals, why, what said the act of the noble lord? It subjected to the operation of the act all persons guilty of making signals by “fire, bonfire, flash, blaze, smoke, or who were present at such signal-making by bonfire, flash, blaze, or smoke;” and it further enacted “that the onus of proving that such signal had not been made should lie on the person charged.” Such was the act of the noble lord—the act which he impressed upon the House as indispensable for the safety of the country. We asked for no such act: we all concurred in deeming it unnecessary to pass a Coercion act for Ireland, such as her peculiar friends required at our hands; we relied upon the ordinary law, and the support of that party, Protestant and Roman Catholic, which was averse from disturbance and agitation. We determined to accept no assistance, which I am bound to say was liberally offered, from any yeomanry corps in Ireland which might have the effect of arousing a spirit of religious animosity. We could not have embodied the yeomanry corps—we could not have called them to aid the government, without risking the engendering of animosities that it might require a great lapse of time to efface. We were determined, unless in case of the last necessity, to waive the assistance, though we thereby discouraged and dispirited many of those who were ready to support us. Our only reliance was on the ordinary powers of the law, energetically but prudently exercised. The charge that you make against us is, that we were supine and inactive, and that we first entrapped those men into the commission of crime. Now, to that charge I give a peremptory denial. But, it is said, we issued no proclamation in time. To this I answer, that we did give a public expression of our views as regarded this agitation for the repeal of the union. At the end of last session, her Majesty expressed her disapproval of that repeal agitation. You say we issued no proclamation on the subject, but I ask what proclamation could have been stronger than that declaration of her Majesty's disapproval of the agitation which was then going on in Ireland? In what more emphatic terms could that disapproval of the agitation have been expressed than it was expressed at the prorogation of parliament? Her Majesty, in proroguing the parliament last session, said:—“I have observed with the deepest concern the persevering efforts which are made to stir up discontent and disaffection among my subjects in Ireland, and to excite them to demand a repeal of the legislative union.”

Her Majesty added:—“I have forborne from requiring any additional powers for the counteraction of designs hostile to the concord and welfare of my dominions, as well from my unwillingness to distrust the efficacy of the ordinary law, as from my reliance on the good sense and patriotism of my people, and on the solemn declarations of parliament in support of the legislative union. I feel assured that those of

my faithful subjects who have influence and authority in Ireland will discourage to the utmost of their power a system of pernicious agitation, which disturbs the industry and retards the improvement of that country, and excites feelings of mutual distrust and animosity between different classes of my people."

That was the proclamation of the Crown with respect to the repeal agitation; and, as ministers of the Crown, we felt it to be our duty to dismiss those magistrates who took part in that agitation. Was not that a sufficient indication of our opinion? But we went further: we dismissed the magistrates who took part in the repeal agitation: and I ask was that no significant expression of our opinion on the subject? But we are blamed for having dismissed them without any previous proclamation on the subject of the meetings. I believe the noble lord opposite considered himself entitled to dismiss Frost, whom he had made a magistrate, because he was a member of the national convention, without having given any proclamation previous to his dismissal. The noble lord wrote to Frost to know if he were a member of the national convention whom he had appointed a magistrate. The noble lord at first thought the answer of Mr. Frost satisfactory. But Mr. Frost made a comment on the noble lord's letter, and Frost was dismissed for attending those meetings, at which violent and inflammatory language was used, although the noble lord did not prosecute those who attended them. We dismissed the magistrates who took part in an agitation which we believed was calculated to endanger the peace of the Empire and to sever the two countries, and we gave these instructions to the Lord-lieutenant of Ireland:—"The moment you are entitled by law to interfere with meetings that endanger the public peace, that moment we authorize and desire you to do so."

I state this to show that the charge against us, that we remained dormant, with folded arms watched the progress of these meetings, is utterly without foundation. Our intention was clearly expressed, that whenever the law enabled and required us to interfere, then we would do so. But at first these meetings were not considered illegal, though there were great doubts of their legality. Separately taken, they were not considered illegal. Suppose, then, we had issued a proclamation, while these doubts yet existed, to disperse these meetings by military force, and there should have been resistance and bloodshed, and homicide had ensued, in what a position should we have been? But there were occasions in the progress of these meetings when there did appear a possibility of interfering in conformity with the law. There was a great meeting at Cashel on the 23rd of May. We wrote to the lord-lieutenant that we had received alarming accounts as to that meeting, and we directed him to send down to the lieutenant of the county to confer with the magistrates, and if affidavits were made by respectable and trustworthy persons, that they apprehended danger to the public peace and safety, they were then to interfere. There was great doubt whether, without affidavits of that nature, there could be any reason for interference; and we said, let the affidavits be voluntary; do not hunt them out in order to warrant interference; but, if trustworthy men of firm minds come forward and testify their alarm at the numbers that are expected at the meeting, and the military organization of the people, in that case we advise you to interfere. My right hon. friend (Sir J. Graham) wrote and said:—"We held a cabinet to day, and the lord chancellor and the law officers were present. The statements of — and — in the absence of depositions and of official information, are too vague to form the groundwork of a safe decision, much less of a positive instruction. We think that you should direct the lieutenant of the county to repair to Tipperary without delay; to consult the magistracy and resident gentry; and to ascertain, as far as possible, the probable character and numbers of the intended meeting. If these inquiries should satisfy the lieutenant that the apprehensions are not exaggerated, and that processions of large multitudes from distant points, with bands and banners, may be expected to flock to the meeting, thereby creating reasonable alarm in the minds of firm and trustworthy men, these statements should be supported by affidavits to be transmitted to you without delay; and in concert with the lord chancellor and your law advisers, it will then be safely open to you to issue a proclamation warning the public of the apprehended danger, and calling on all loyal subjects to abstain from attendance, and from giving any countenance to such an assembly. On a careful consideration of the affidavits in the case supposed, you must determine

whether it may not be prudent to prevent the assembly by occupying the ground, and even by dispersing it, if they persevere, after notice, in coming together. This last step should be avoided if possible, since it may lead to a serious collision and loss of life."

That was the course which we took with regard to a meeting at which it was supposed that interference might be called for. There was to have been another meeting, at which we had every reason to expect that, had it taken place, there would have been a collision between the people and the military, and these are the orders we gave that the meeting should be prevented: this is an extract from a letter dated the 18th of May:—"But the most important subject is the intended repeal meeting at Enniskillen, summoned by the Roman Catholic priest, to be held in the chapel yard. There can be no doubt whatever, that such a meeting in that place, in present circumstances, would lead to a most serious affray. It is the duty of the magistrates, if there be affidavits deposing to apprehension of danger, to transmit them to the castle; and to me it is clear that, if these affidavits set forth the just apprehensions of firm and reasonable men, the government is bound to interpose and prevent the assembly. Whatever the event may be, law is on the side of the authorities, which seek to preserve the public peace."

Why did we not interfere then with that meeting? Because, in consequence of the peculiar circumstances, those who intended to hold it decided on not meeting, and accordingly it did not take place. A meeting was held at Clones, in the county Monaghan, at which a life was lost, and a meeting was afterwards to be held at Dungannon, at which a collision was apprehended. Well, did we want to provoke a collision? Were we mad and wicked enough to wish to see bloodshed? Badly as you think of us, we wished to be forbearing; we wished to avoid a conflict; we wished to prevent a collision of physical force; we saw thousands and tens of thousands of men, organized and assembling together, obedient to the commands of the leaders, and acting in concert together. Still, while all was peaceable, while there was no apprehension of danger, we determined, if possible, not lightly to interfere—not to issue out a special proclamation—not to call for the interference of the military. But when actual danger was apprehended from the calling of various meetings, then we felt it our duty to interfere and to prevent such meetings as were pregnant with danger from being held. A meeting was to be held in the North of Ireland, at which it was anticipated there might be a just cause of alarm as to its effect on the public peace. That meeting was to be held at Dungannon, and we gave orders to have care taken to prevent any collision, but the meeting was not held, and any interference was therefore unnecessary. I stated that if affidavits were made as to the chance of collision or danger to the public peace, by persons capable of forming a correct opinion, then the authorities ought to interfere, but they ought not to interfere on vague intelligence. Why did they not interfere with respect to the meeting to be held at Dungannon? Because the Repealers did not hold their intended meeting at that town. We made no parade of the intention to interfere, in order to prevent a collision, and the good sense of the people prevented any riot or collision. Have I not now satisfied the House, that there was no covert design on the part of the government to entrap men into the commission of crime? We witnessed, it is true, the attempts made to keep up the agitation, but we had hopes that it would subside; but the Irish people, with all their good qualities, are a mercurial people, and liable to be excited by such appeals as were made to them, and we accordingly took those precautions which you now consider proofs of a design to govern Ireland by a military force; but we were most desirous to avoid any necessity for resorting to force to prevent any of those meetings. When those meetings assumed a dangerous character, it was necessary to interfere. I am trying to make no comments that are not absolutely necessary; but what friend of peace would advise a meeting in the county of Tipperary, and would choose as the day of meeting the anniversary of the Irish rebellion—a meeting to be called in a county in such a disturbed state, and in which soon afterwards was perpetrated the most horrid tragedy to be found in the records of crime—the murder of Mr. Waller—who, I say, would advise hundreds and thousands of people to be invited to hear inflammatory speeches, and that the day selected for such a purpose should be the anniversary of the Irish rebellion? And what were the scenes selected for these meetings? The Hill of Tara, the Rath

of Mullaghmast, Clontarf—these were the spots that were selected; and every appeal was made by some to revive the bitter animosities of barbarous times, to throw back the tie of civilisation, and to evoke the bitter spirit of former times, which distinguished and exasperated the different races that prevailed in Ireland. Look at the days that were chosen for these objects. Look at the scenes which were selected for the meetings, and I ask you is there not evidence—as far as anniversaries of days and places can furnish evidence—of a conspiracy to effect a legal object by illegal means—not by the present use, but by the display of physical force? Well, but you say, “Why did you interfere at all at Clontarf?” Sir, those who act with forbearance are always liable to that taunt. You forbear from acting, and when the necessity for acting arises you certainly expose yourself to that imputation. Having forbore so long, why did you act then? We interfered at Clontarf on this account—Clontarf was the second meeting in the metropolis. There had been a previous meeting in Dublin. Clontarf followed on the meetings of Tara and Mullaghmast. Clontarf had this distinguishing character, that there was a military array. The Repeal cavalry was invited to be present. I apprehend that cavalry are hardly necessary for the purpose of petitioning. The cavalry were invited to attend under a proclamation which formed them as a military body. Military terms were made use of, and that proclamation issued from the Corn Exchange. [Mr. E. B. Roche.—Not from the Corn Exchange.] The first proclamation came from the Corn Exchange. [Mr. E. B. Roche.—The second did, not the first.] I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon. I am pretty well versed in these documents, and I think I am correct in stating that the first proclamation came from the Corn Exchange. The hon. gentleman says only the second proclamation issued from the Corn Exchange; but I have the most confident belief that the first proclamation issued from the Corn Exchange too. There is the same proof that the first issued from the Corn Exchange that we have as to the second—both are dated from the Corn Exchange. I think I am right in what I state. The proclamation says—“All mounted Repealers are to muster in the open ground, and to form into troops, each troop to consist of twenty-five horsemen, to be led by one officer in front, followed by six ranks, four abreast, half distance, each wearing wand and cockade, distinguishing the number of his respective troop. The committee will meet at the Corn Exchange, every day in the ensuing week, from four to five o'clock. (Dated, Corn Exchange, September 13, 1843.)”

But it is asked why we proceeded in this case when we had issued no proclamation to prevent the previous meetings? Because having consulted the Lord-chancellor of England, having consulted the Attorney-general, and the Solicitor-general, we put this question—“independent of affidavit, does this summoning of a meeting in military array, and with military organization, of itself constitute an illegal meeting, because if it does, we are then determined to interfere by proclamation?” The answer was, that that one particular individual meeting did differ in its character from the meetings of Cashel, of Mallow, and others; that that meeting, not on account of its numbers, but on account of its military character, was in itself illegal, and the government was warranted in issuing a proclamation. We then resolved on issuing a proclamation. The circumstances under which that proclamation was issued have already been fully explained to the House, and I shall not again travel over them. We lamented the shortness of the notice, but if we attempted to interfere with that meeting, the shortness of notice was inevitable. It is said we did not issue the notice till late in the day. It is said we did not issue it till five in the evening, when it was too dark to read the proclamation, I have here the counter-proclamation—and which is a matter of great importance, I refute that statement by a reference to this document. The counter-proclamation by Mr. O'Connell, is dated Saturday, October 7, three o'clock p.m., and this counter-proclamation begins by stating,—“Whereas there has appeared, under the signature of ‘E. B. Sugden,’ a paper being, or purporting to be a proclamation, &c.”

Now, observe, this counter-proclamation is printed and dated Saturday, three o'clock. There was, therefore, time to print this proclamation after they had seen the proclamation which was issued by the government. I lament the shortness of the notice, but don't, for the purpose of aggravating the charge against us, depart from the facts, and make the notice shorter than it really was. We determined

therefore, to disperse the meeting at Clontarf, or rather to occupy the ground, and make such a demonstration as would prevent the meeting taking place, giving the earliest notice, and taking every possible precaution to prevent the possibility of collision. We determined also, after the notice given by the declaration of her Majesty at the close of last session, by this proclamation, and after the notice given by the dismissal of magistrates—we determined to prosecute the parties who had been instrumental in causing these meetings to be held, and adopting these acts—we determined to prosecute them for that conspiracy of which we conscientiously thought them guilty. The right hon. gentleman asks, why did we not prosecute the printers? My hon. friend has given the answer. We might incarcerate the printers; but even where the name of the author of the seditious paper was attached to it, there were no means of getting at the author. Printers had been prosecuted before, and government was covered with ridicule for not striking at the causes of the danger, but contenting themselves with the punishment of the mere instruments. Sir, I ask the House to put together these facts—the references to the United States—the publication of the speeches which the son of the President thought it decent to make—the declaration of the son of the chief executive officer of the United States, that “the libation to freedom must sometimes be quaffed in blood.” I ask you to bear in mind that these newspapers were not individual publications, and unconnected with the parties to this offence which we call conspiracy. The reason why we read the extracts from newspapers, and made the defendants responsible for those newspapers, was this—that they belonged to an association which undertook the circulation of them—that those newspapers contained appeals to the army—that they contained appeals to every prejudice which could be raised in the mind of the Celt against the Saxon. I ask you to bear in mind the scenes chosen for the meetings, for the express purpose of reminding the Irishmen attending them of events in past history which you cannot reflect on without the deepest lamentation—bear in mind that the 23rd of May was chosen as the anniversary of the Irish insurrection—remember the songs that were distributed and introduced by some, I know not by whom, into the barracks of the troops. Who was responsible for circulating such songs as this?—

“Who fears to speak of ‘Ninety-eight?”

Who blushes at the name?

When cowards mock the patriot’s fate,

Who hangs his head for shame?”

“He’s all a knave, or half a slave,

Who slights his country thus?

But a true man, like you, man,

Will fill your glass with us.”

Can you mistake what the object was of the studious circulation among an inflammable people of songs like this? Who are the really responsible parties? The printer who printed them? Was it not he, whoever he may be, who belonged to an association which had officers, subordinate officers, whose duty it was to circulate the newspapers containing such songs and appeals, because of the subscriptions they received? Should we have been justified in the state in which the country was, in refusing to appeal to that which was our only instrument—the ordinary law of this country—for the repression of such proceedings? I will not enter into the subject of the trials themselves; the House must be completely exhausted on that topic. We determined to appeal to the law. We did appeal to it. I declare that it was far from our wish that the Jury should be constituted on any other principle than those which are consistent with public justice. Our advice was, “Don’t strike off a Roman Catholic in his capacity of Roman Catholic,” thus acknowledging the perfect equality between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant. We appealed to the law. We succeeded in proving that the offence charged was within the law. It is impossible, certainly, to satisfy those who object to our course. The right hon. gentleman opposite says, you have only convinced us that there should have been no prosecution. We had only one instrument; we had no Coercion Act. We determined not to avail ourselves of the protestant feeling existing in Ireland; but we had only the common law; and then, when we use that instrument, you turn round upon us, and you charge us, that upon us rests the responsibility of all these affairs, as promoting the discontent which we would suppress. But was, I ask you, the country in that state that you could forbear? You charge us with seeking to govern Ireland by military law. See, you say, how the Army has been increased by 7,000 men. Let me now put the House in possession of the state in which the country was placed

by this continued agitation. In the South of Ireland, night after night, there appeared the most extraordinary display of signal fires on every eminence in the country. Here are some of the accounts we received. On the 20th of October, 1843, the account I am about to read is dated from the county of Tipperary:—"Last evening, about eight or nine o'clock, the hills in this part of the country, through nearly an entire district, were lighted simultaneously, and they continued so for nearly an hour. We have not ascertained the object of these fires, but they seem to be in connection with the repeal movement. Much excitement prevails, particularly amongst the Protestants, many of whom congregated at my quarters next the police-barracks in self-defence. However, the night passed quietly by."

Another letter from Tipperary describes a similar state of things, and adds,—“We could hear the shouts of the people. The Protestants of the town and neighbourhood are in great alarm, fearing that the town will be attacked. About ten young men armed themselves, and came to the police-barracks, in order to render assistance.”

From Galway there were the same accounts. One letter says,—“Last night there were more signal fires, and in the adjoining counties of Clare and Tipperary. We could hear the blowing of horns and the shouts of the people. Candles were lighted in all the houses in Woodford, except three, and the inhabitants thought an insurrectionary movement was about to take place.”

Sir, were these things for the purpose of petition? Were not these things the result of that fearful system of agitation which left us at last no alternative, if we wished to prevent collision and insurrectionary outbreak, but to appeal to the only instrument left to us, and to call on the chief movers of the agitation to answer to their country for their conduct? We preferred the charge—not lightly, as I have shown, having trapped the parties into the offence; we preferred the charge under the ordinary law—under the same law in which you prosecuted Vincent, under the same law to which you appealed when you read newspapers that had been published at a previous period, and made Vincent responsible for their publication. We charged those persons under the law of conspiracy, because we did not wish to proceed against subordinate agents; we proceeded against those who told us that our “do-nothing” policy would not do—who declared that the Queen had the power to repeal the Act of Union—who boasted that they would drive a coach and six through all our Acts of Parliament—that they would evade and defy the law. We stepped forward, not in consequence of these taunts, but because of the state of the country, brought on by this pernicious agitation; we went to the court and asked whether such proceedings were tolerable in a country where civil government prevails. The Bench were unanimous in their opinion as to the law, the Jury brought in a discriminating and considerate verdict, and the parties charged were convicted of the offence laid in the indictment. We have done this without coercion, without appealing to the excited and irritated feelings; and having done this, and having at least succeeded without the effusion of blood, without conflict, without collision, then comes a powerful party in this House to arraign us for the course we have pursued. The whole indignation of that party is directed against us—sometimes for our forbearance, sometimes for our vigour. Wise after the result, every step we have taken during this painful and anxious effort to maintain the law by the ordinary powers of the law—every step, I say, is now tracked with the sagacity of party, to fasten on some little error or mistake—to charge us with being reckless of life—to allege against us an indifference to liberty, and a desire to govern Ireland by the sword instead of by the law. If we had taken some other course—if we had been too precipitate in our interference—if we had dispersed a meeting when we were not legally empowered to do so—if we had charged illegality as against a single individual meeting, and had failed to prove it—had we selected some poor printer and shut him in gaol—had we done either or all of these things, I appeal to the House with what very different sounds, with what very different accusations, would these walls now have been ringing. You would have told us that we had interposed without a necessity—that we had evinced a desire to interfere with the right of petition—that we had not the courage to select the favourites of the people—that we had pursued the unmanly and paltry course of inflicting vengeance on a printer. But we had the courage to face the difficulties of the case, to apprehend and bring to trial the powerful among the leaders of the people. Sir, I must say, in the face of the country, that



in repressing this agitation we have had no assistance whatever from the other side. At the same, I can say with perfect truth, that you (addressing the opposition) know what it is to be exposed to the same painful trials. You have had organized meetings against the public peace; it has been your fate—your painful fate—to have had to deal with the fires at Bristol, the attack on Newport, and the insurrection in Canada. If you had then found a powerful party ranged against you,—if we had taken up Mr. Papineau and espoused his cause—I beg pardon, you took him up,—if we had watched all your proceedings in Canada,—if we had brought forward a motion inculcating you, when the Grand Jury ignored the bills, and you sent *ex officio* informations against the disturbers of the public peace,—if we had tracked you at every step, expressing a faint disapprobation only of the “hardly justifiable conduct” of men engaged in the cause of liberty;—had we done these things, then, let me tell you, you would have found it a much more difficult task than you did to vindicate the law, and protect the authority of the government. Sir, this is the defence which I offer on the part of the government—for our forbearance at first—for our determination to make use of no other instrument than the law—and for our application of the law, when considerations of the public safety left us no alternative but to pursue a course of repression. Sir, I have still to make some observations on that which will be remembered, when these party conflicts shall have been forgotten. By far the most important part of this great question is the policy to be hereafter pursued towards Ireland. Sir, I do not hesitate to declare, upon this occasion, that I shall consider it my first duty to consider what, in the present state of Ireland, the public interests require. I shall not be driven by the fear of any taunts, or by any quotations from *Hansard*, from freely and fully expressing my opinions as to the course which should now be pursued. I should be utterly ashamed of myself if I was prevented by the fear of being charged with inconsistency, from advising and adopting any measure which I believed would be conducive to the restoration of peace, and the advancement of the general interests of the whole country. Sir, this is a comprehensive and difficult subject; it embraces the position of Ireland with respect to her physical and material interests; it concerns the civil and political rights of the people; it refers to matters connected with their religious sentiments and their religious instruction. Sir, the hon. member for Cork (Mr. O’Connell) attached great, but not undue, importance to the physical condition of Ireland. He stated, and with truth, that political grievances would be less felt if the material condition of the people were less miserable; but if his be a true representation, I wonder that when the hon. and learned gentleman demanded an identity in the franchise—when he claimed at least an equality of the franchise proportionate to the amount of property and population—I wonder it did not occur to him, that if wealth be taken into the calculation, supposing his statement, that 70 per cent. of the whole population are involved in pauperism, to be accurate, that a franchise in exact proportion to the population would be full of danger, and involve a hazard which it would be most unwise to encounter. Sir, whatever may be our differences in other respects, in one thing, at least, we all agree, in the endeavour to improve the social condition of Ireland apart from political considerations. Sir, her Majesty’s government gave to that subject, during the continuance of the late excitement, their fullest consideration. In the course of last session a bill was brought in by a benevolent member of this House—the hon. member for Rochdale (Mr. S. Crawford), to improve the law of landlord and tenant in Ireland. I promised, on the part of the government, that all due consideration should be given to that bill; that promise I fulfilled; but upon reflection, we felt that the subject was so vast, and the evils connected with it so various and complicated, that no legislation upon it could be beneficial except it were founded on the very fullest information as to the actual circumstances of the case. I therefore advised her Majesty to appoint a commission composed of landlords in Ireland, whom I took care should be men equally distinguished for their character and intelligence as for the extent of their property. In order to show that we wished no religious feeling or prejudice to creep into this inquiry, if our wishes had been fulfilled, the commission would have consisted of four gentlemen, besides the Earl of Devon, two of whom should have been Protestants, and two Roman Catholics. One of the gentlemen, however, to whom I applied, was prevented from agreeing to my request, not from any unwillingness to forward

the inquiry, but from the circumstances that his health or the calls of other duties would prevent him; and I then proceeded to form the commission in such a way as I thought most likely to render it efficient for the object in view. I desired that the whole state of the relations of landlords and tenants in Ireland should be ascertained and made clear. It is, I am aware, a very difficult question. A very strong, and I do not hesitate to say, a very unfair and unjust prejudice exists against the whole class of landlords in Ireland, as though they were of a different class of men, and actuated by different motives and feelings to the landlords in England, no account being taken of the peculiar and unfavourable circumstances in which they were themselves placed with regard to their property. I thought it better, therefore, that we should institute an inquiry into the state of those connected with land in various parts of the country, rather than depend upon the information received casually from particular districts; as for instance, in some parts of the North, where the condition of the tenant is said to be an improved and improving one. Above all things, I thought that this inquiry would do good, by bringing to light the conduct of landlords, and so restraining them from the habit of perverting the law to do wrong. I thought it would be of use to bring to light and contrast the conduct of the good and judicious landlord with that of the harsh and overbearing landlord. In bringing all these facts to light, I thought we should be taking the best means to draw attention to the subject, and to lead to a practical amelioration of the tenantry of Ireland. The noble lord opposite has referred to a book entitled "A Cry from Ireland." I have read that book, and it is impossible for any man to read it without being shocked at the manner in which the legal powers of the landlords are too frequently used in Ireland. The noble lord suggests that a short act of parliament might at once be introduced to remedy this evil. Then why does not the noble lord bring it in himself? Will he allow me to ask him—I do not speak for the purpose of crimination—what he has been doing for the last ten years, if legislation on this subject is so easy? Is there not, indeed, a greater danger that when altering the legal exercise of rights as they at present exist, by the interposition of a new law, you may not be incurring new evils as great as those which you so attempt to remedy? Just see how conflicting are the opinions. The noble lord says that commissions are dangerous. I know they are. But I have heard a good deal more said about this commission than some others that I remember. I know the expectations which such commissions always excite. We could not inquire into the disturbances in South Wales by means of a commission without exciting the most ridiculous expectations. In short, it is impossible to detail the extraordinary delusive expectations which are derived from inquiries of this kind. But the noble lord says, "I wish for a small bill," not explaining what is to be the character of it. Now, this is exactly the course which has been adopted for the last ten years. Some member not connected with the government asks leave to bring in a bill to amend the law relating to landlord and tenant in Ireland. The chief secretary for Ireland gets up and says, "This is a subject full of difficulties, but I do not object to the hon. member bringing in his bill." The bill is brought in and read a first time. The second reading is moved; the chief secretary does not object to that, but reserves himself for the committee. The bill gets into committee, and on the first clause the hon. member is met by ten thousand valid objections; the bill consequently stands over, the session closes, and nothing is done. That has been the course for the last ten years. Sir, we have done precisely this:—We allowed the hon. member for Rochdale (Mr. S. Crawford) to introduce his bill; we allowed it to be read a second time, and then on some Wednesday, when the committee came on, it was inevitably postponed and laid over until the session closed. Could it be otherwise? Is not that the way we should have been obliged to redeem our pledge to the hon. member of giving the bill our consideration? Then says the right hon. gentleman opposite, "I will take the opinions of two Irishmen supposed to be particularly versed in the subject of the relation of landlord and tenant in Ireland." Says one of them, the hon. and learned member for Cork,—“I anticipate the greatest objections to the landlord and tenant commission. There is one simple remedy for the evils of Ireland. Repeal all the laws that have been passed since the Union. That will restore Ireland to the happy state in which she was under that parliament which was so celebrated for its purity, and integrity—the last that sat in Dublin.”

This is the opinion of one of two authorities. What says the right hon. gentleman, Mr. Sheil? He was determined to give warning beforehand. "I understand," says he, "that you intend to interfere with the bill introduced by that consummate master of the law of landlord and tenant, Mr. Lynch, who is actually a master in Chancery. I warn you to take heed how you tamper with a law which is the *Magna Charta* of landlords and tenants in Ireland."

That, then, is the contradictory advice of two eminent Irish members. One says that we must not touch the last act which has been passed on the subject, for by so doing we shall compromise the rights of landlords and tenants, and he is followed by his hon. and learned friend, who says that the only thing is to abolish every law that has been passed since the union. Sir, I ask the House, is it not wiser to adopt that course which has met with the approbation of the very high authority of two Roman Catholic members who have spoken in the course of this debate, in a spirit which entitles them to the highest respect—I mean the members for Louth and Roscommon? Those hon. members, in speeches in which was not infused one particle of party spirit, have declared their approbation of the landlord and tenant commission, stating that they thought the motives of her Majesty's government in appointing it were honest, and that the course pursued was, in all the difficulties, the wisest course. Sir, we have been influenced by no other motives in appointing that commission than because we believe it will form the foundation of permanent and useful legislation—protecting the rights of property, encouraging no vain expectations; but being fully convinced that we cannot probe the evil to its bottom, except through the instrumentality of extensive local information. So much for a measure upon which we depend, not so much for the purpose of immediate improvement, as because it will lay the foundation of future improvement in the moral and physical condition of the people, so far as that is mixed up with the relation of landlord and tenant. And now, Sir, as to the franchise. I have no hesitation on the part of the government in declaring their desire that every privilege given by the Catholic Relief-bill, and every vote given by the Reform-bill, should be fully and fairly exercised. I do not know what the noble lord's opinions may be on this point. I am certain, however, it would be unwise now to disturb the relative proportions of members fixed by the Reform Act for the two countries. But, as to the franchise on principle, I think it ought to be one of substantial equality between Ireland and Great Britain. I do not say identity—that would be impossible. I do not say nominal equality—that would be unattainable; but I cannot contend against this principle—I willingly indeed admit it—that there ought to be substantial equality of civil privileges for Protestant and Catholic, and that the franchise should be really equal in the two countries. That there ought not to be identity nor nominal equality many even on the opposite side will, I suppose, be foremost to contend; for on that side in the course of this debate there has been the most anxious endeavour to deprecate the extension to Ireland of the "Chandos clause," it having been said that the application of that clause to Ireland would encourage landlords to refuse to grant leases for years or lives, and to require tenancies at will. I give, Sir, no opinion on that subject. I refer only to arguments used in this debate, to show that gentlemen on the other side do not contend for identity or nominal equality of franchise. Nor, Sir, do I mean that in the case of any Irish franchise which may have been abolished on account of the manner in which it has been abused, that it should be restored merely because it exists in England. But I hope I shall not be misunderstood when I say—(it is sufficient for the purposes of this debate)—speaking of the franchise—I think the principle on which we ought to go—I will not recur to the past on this subject; I will not be deterred by fear of taunts about Registration-bills from freely avowing my opinion—the principle which we wish to apply is that of substantial equality between the two countries. It is enough for the purpose of this debate, to deal with principles, and I abstain from entering into details. And now, Sir, I approach by far the most important subject connected with Ireland, namely, the course we ought to take with respect to the Established Church in Ireland. On that I will without reserve, with the same explicitness as my noble and right hon. friends, declare my opinion; and if the House permit me, I will state the reasons for that opinion. I find in Ireland the Protestant reformed religion and the Episcopal Church established in that country. I find that they have been

established for a period of above 250 years, and I find that establishment ratified and confirmed by acts of parliament, partaking of the nature of a solemn compact, so far as an act of parliament can. I believe that will hardly be denied by hon. members on the other side. It was the intention of parliament at the time of the Union, to give an assurance to the Protestants of Ireland, and to the Protestants of this country, that the passing of the Act of Union should not endanger the existence of the Established Church, and that its endowments should be secured to it. I am stating as far as possible what were the intentions of the legislature. At a subsequent period, in 1829, I am bound to say, the intentions of those who passed the measure of that year—of those who invited Protestants to waive their objections, and who used all their influence to combat those objections—their intention was to give assurance to the Protestants, and if they acquiesced in the removal of Catholic disabilities, there should be a guarantee to the Established Church. Now, I must say, that so far as compacts can have force, the Union and the Emancipation Act were such compacts. Precisely the same compact was established with Scotland at the time of the Union. At that time a guarantee was given that the Presbyterian Church should be the established religion—or rather at an earlier period that assurance was given; but it was confirmed by Queen Anne at the time of the Union. I was rather surprised to hear the right hon. gentleman, the member for Edinburgh (Mr. Macaulay), in the course of his eloquent and very able speech, advert to what took place on the abolition of the slave-trade, with the view of justifying our departing from the compact entered into at the period of the Union with Ireland. "Men have changed their opinions on many important points," said the right hon. gentleman; and then he described the scene graphically, in which he said Mr. Wilberforce had "pulled down the present Duke of Northumberland when rising to propose the abolition of slavery." Those who recollect the relative size of the two individuals must admit the picture of the right hon. gentleman to have been purely imaginative. And the right hon. gentleman drew not less upon his imagination for the debate than for the description. I have referred to it since, and this is really what took place:—So far from Mr. Wilberforce abjuring the notion of the abolition of slavery, he said he did not press it then, he expressly said—"I have never been of opinion that slavery should not ultimately be abolished. I wished to postpone the period of abolition until the time when the mind of the negro shall have been prepared by education for the blessings of freedom."

And this the right hon. gentleman considers a parallel case to that of the guarantee given at the Union for the perpetuation of the Established Church! All I say is, that so far as national compacts can have force, that compact does exist for the maintenance of the Established Church in Ireland. But, again, so far as authority can go, I can refer to the highest in favour of its maintenance. I will not quote men prejudiced in favour of the Church. I will take those than whom I could not name men whose opinions you would soon take on matters affecting the comprehensive interests of Ireland, and particularly with respect to the church and the Catholics—I will cite the opinions of Mr. Burke, Mr. Grattan, Lord Plunkett, and Sir J. Newport. Mr. Burke, the earliest and the ablest of the advocates of Catholic claims—entertaining the keenest sense of the wrongs inflicted by the penal code, and whose speeches showed that he then maintained principles subsequently carried out, but which at that time excited little attention—Mr. Burke did not conceal from himself any part of the truth as respects the church:—"You have in Ireland an establishment which, though the religion of the prince, and of most of the first classes of landed proprietors, is not the religion of the major part of the inhabitants, and which, consequently, does not answer to them any one purpose of a religious establishment." "It is an establishment from which they did not partake the least, living or dying, either of instruction or of consolation."

Therefore Mr. Burke did not conceal from himself any of the objections which are now urged against the Established Church; but at the same time he went on and said—"Not one of the zealots for a Protestant interest wishes more sincerely than I do, perhaps not half so sincerely, for the support of the Established Church in both these kingdoms. It is a great link towards holding fast the connection of religion with the state. I wish it well, as the religion of the greater number of the primary land proprietors of the kingdom, with whom all establishments of church

and state, for strong political reasons, ought, in my opinion, to be firmly connected. I wish it well, because it is more closely combined than any other of the church systems with the Crown, which is the stay of the mixed constitution. I have another and infinitely stronger reason for wishing it well. It is, that at the present time I will consider it as one of the main pillars of the Christian religion itself."

Now, these are the opinions of Mr. Burke—with all the objections to the establishment clearly before him, and placed on record by himself. With respect to Lord Plunkett, he said he would fling the Roman Catholic question to the winds if he thought the removal of the Roman Catholic disabilities would compromise the existence of the Established Church. The dying bequest of Mr. Grattan to his country was an earnest wish that the removal of the Roman Catholic disabilities might be combined with that which he thought essential, namely, the maintenance of the Protestant Church in Ireland. The opinion of Sir J. Newport was, that the Protestant Established Church, at the time he was speaking, required extensive reforms, and it was also the opinion of Sir J. Newport—a man inferior to the others in point of intellectual grasp, but not in devotion and tried fidelity to Ireland—that the Roman Catholic disabilities ought to be removed—that there ought to be perfect equality of privilege and franchise, but that the Established Church in Ireland ought to be maintained as the establishment of the country. I think, therefore, I am not going too far in saying, that as far as compact and authority are concerned, they have as great weight as they possibly can have in favour of the Established Church. But it may be asked, are compact and authority to be conclusive and decisive? If we are now ourselves convinced that the social welfare of Ireland requires an alteration of the law, and a departure from that compact, and a disregard of that authority, are our legislative functions to be so bound up, that they must maintain the compact in spite of our conviction? I for one am not prepared to contend for such a proposition. But at the same time this compact is a most material element for our consideration:—Nothing would have a greater tendency to lower the authority of parliament than not to keep the faith you have pledged; to make these compacts, and then, within ten years, to revoke them. While I do not think they impose on you a paramount obligation, to which you are bound at all hazards and at all risks to defer, yet I do think that nothing would be more unfortunate, and nothing more prejudicial to your authority—nothing so destructive of the prospect of future legislation, as a departure from such compacts. How can you hope to persuade parts of the population of this country, having strong feelings and opinions to relinquish them in consequence of your guarantee and assurances, unless you are prepared to maintain them, or prepared to show that there is a positive overwhelming necessity which obliges you to depart from them? I maintain the Church in Ireland not only on compact, not only on authority, but I maintain it on that higher ground which is convincing to my own mind. After the most dispassionate consideration I bring reason and conviction in aid of both compact and authority. I therefore will not defend the church merely on the comparatively narrow ground of compact. I will not say, "I wish I could alter it, I think it is for the interest of Ireland to alter it, but I am bound by a compact." 'That is not my impediment.' My impediment to the destruction or undermining of the Protestant Church is derived from the conviction of my own mind. I do not believe it to be for the interest of Ireland, or any portion of Ireland, that I should acquiesce in the destruction of the Protestant Church; and I will assign my reasons for this conviction. I am not now to determine what is the best condition in respect to a new state of society in which more than 7,000,000 profess a religion different from the Protestant Church, and not more than 2,000,000 profess the faith of the Protestant Church. I am not considering what is the best constitution for that society. I am to deal with a country in respect to which these compacts and guarantees exist, and with respect to which there is a prescription of 250 years—and with respect to which the landed proprietors, the great mass of them Protestants, are identified in feeling with the established Church. I am now to consider what, under all the circumstances of this case, is the best arrangement to make? First of all, I contend for the necessity of an establishment. I apprehend, that without infringing on the privileges or conscience of any man, I have a right to maintain this opinion. I think, with the example of establishments in England and Scotland, and with my conviction as to what is necessary for the purpose of

religion, that in Ireland an establishment of some kind is necessary. [Hear.] Do not take advantage of an expression. I am now addressing myself to the first step in the argument—shall there be an establishment or not? You say I am wrong, for that an establishment is not necessary. You may cavil at my expression, but I am considering the great question, is it for the public interest to have an establishment? One of my reasons for maintaining an establishment in Ireland is, because I think it important for Ireland. I think, if you had no establishment in that country, you would have bitterer religious animosities. I look at the question, first, as it affects Ireland; and next, of this I am certain, that if you establish the precedent of having no establishment in Ireland, little time will elapse before the precedent will be referred to as a principle applicable to England. How long a period do you suppose would elapse? The other night an hon. friend of mine, the member for Pontefract, gave notice of his intention to move a resolution in favour of a provision for the secular Roman Catholic clergy; and immediately the hon. member for Sheffield gave notice of his intention to move, as an amendment upon that motion, "That no provision for the maintenance of the secular Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland can be just or expedient, or will tend to the re-establishment of tranquillity in that country, unless based upon such a revision of the whole ecclesiastical system as will place the clergy of all religious denominations upon a footing of perfect equality."

And the hon. member for Montrose was so impatient, that he would not wait for the introduction of the bill, or even for the discussion of the motion; but, on hearing the notices given, was good enough at once to signify his intention to apply the same principle to this country as his hon. friend intended to apply to the establishment of Ireland, and gave notice of a motion for an address to her Majesty—"That she will be pleased to institute an inquiry, whether the number of her Majesty's subjects dissenting from the doctrines and discipline of the Established churches of England, Ireland, and Scotland, are now more in number than those who belong to and attend the Established churches; and if so, whether the time is not arrived when all the public property granted by parliament for the support of those Established churches, should be withdrawn from them, respect being had to the existing interests of the clergy and other persons actually employed in the service of the Established churches; and whether it will not be more just and useful to the people of this kingdom to apply the revenue of the Church for the purpose of educating the people, or for such other national purposes as parliament may think fit."

If you apply this principle in Ireland it will be referred to as a rule for England; and, therefore, my opinion is decidedly in favour of an establishment, and it is decidedly in favour of continuing the Protestant Church as that establishment. I cannot conceive a more important question than that which will arise as to the nature of the relations between an Established church and the State. The Roman Catholics say they will submit to no regulations. In the case of the Protestant Church—when you made it a State establishment—when you gave it endowments—you subjected it to great restrictions. You controlled the meeting of its convocation; you expressed great anxiety regarding its authority; you displayed considerable jealousy of its acts; and you subjected it to the restraints of the law; at the same time that you also subjected it to the milder restraints of patronage, and gave to the Crown the right of preferment to its highest offices. It is difficult to estimate the influence of these circumstances over the church. It is difficult to decide how it may have effected its position. But what do the Roman Catholics say? They tell you—If we take our endowments, we will not submit to your power. We will not be subjected to your restraints; we will refuse to concede you any control; and the appointment to our highest offices shall be vested in a spiritual, and not a civil, functionary. Said the hon. member for Kildare the other night, speaking with great decision and much authority, if you try to interfere with our arrangements with the Pope, if you take the course that other countries take, I tell you that your authority will not prevail—that your regulations will not be observed—that the ecclesiastical authorities in Ireland will rebel. That is the opinion of the hon. member for Kildare. Will he tell me, then, what equality there can be in giving the endowments of the church, which is now under our control, to a form of religious faith which refuses to submit to our regulations? On the part of all churches there

is a disposition to remonstrate against the exercise of the civil power—there is an impatience, a great impatience, of civil control. You have thought proper to control the church. You have ever been jealous of those who claimed more than ordinary exemption from secular authority. In Scotland within the last two years, you have found a party in the Established church claiming exemption from civil control, demanding to be subjected to spiritual authority only, and requiring that the boundaries between spiritual and civil control should be defined. You have not conceded these demands. What would you do with your own, the Protestant Episcopal Church, supposing she was to ask for the same immunities and exemptions now demanded on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland? Would you grant her supreme authority in spiritual matters? I am sure you would not; and I ask, therefore, what right has a church which refuses to submit to your control, to claim for itself the transfer of those privileges which now belong to a church which submits to control? The noble lord (Lord Howick) said, that it was an objection to establishments, that the selection of one form of worship was an insult to the professors of another faith.

Lord Howick.—No, no. The learned recorder said, that he defended the maintenance of the Established church because it rested on the eternal principle of religious truth. What I said was, that if you declared it to rest on the eternal principles of religious truth, you implied that others rested on principles of religious error.

Sir R. Peel.—I don't admit that as a consequence, and I tell the noble lord at once, that I do say, that in this country a preference is given by the legislature to the Protestant Church from a preference—a decided preference—to its doctrines. Yes, and I say more; I say that the preference to its doctrines implies no insult to those who dissent from those doctrines, and that it is extravagant to say that, because I prefer my own form of religious faith, I am involved in the necessity of insulting or persecuting those who differ from me. I say too, that, as far as this objection goes, the principle of an establishment does not depend on majorities or minorities. You may think it right to establish a form of religion on account of the majority adopting and professing that form; but the fact of your establishing that form gives you no right to insult the minority who dissent from it. Every one has a proposition on this subject, and the hon. member for Sheffield has his. I consider the proposition of the hon. member tantamount to a total suppression of all churches. He proposes to divide the revenue into three parts, according to certain proportions. He gives £70,000 to the Presbyterians, £70,000 to the Episcopalian Church, and £430,000 to the Catholic Church. I say it evinces no equality to give £70,000 to a church which submits to your control, and £430,000 to a church which does not. To do that would be, I think, to reverse the principle of justice. If you follow out the principle of numbers, the mere analogy would lead you to establish the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. Is the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) prepared for that? Are you prepared to admit those who owe their promotion to another power than the Crown, to sit on the bishops' bench in the House of Lords? If you are not prepared to do that, you must admit that your principle of equality requires modification. What is the proposition? "On account of those difficulties which you say exist, permit us to relieve you from them, and to destroy the Established Church." I must say, a more unreasonable and unjust proposition was never made. Here is a religion guaranteed by solemn acts of parliament, by long prescription, the Protestant religion, which is in alliance with the state, which has endowed it for 250 years. I am told I cannot maintain it, not because they want the Roman Catholic religion to be established, but because it is inconvenient that an establishment should contain what will promote religious peace in Ireland. Do you believe that it will promote mutual concord to say to the Protestants, "Civil disabilities have been removed, equality of franchise has been granted; we now tell you we cannot maintain the Established Church any longer, and you must relinquish it?" You don't know to what extent you would then go. Would you stop with the endowments? What will you do as to the places of worship? Do you mean that you would confer religious peace on the country by calling upon the Protestants to sacrifice their endowments, and to transfer their churches to the Roman Catholics? You must do that if you adopt the principle of analogy, on the principle of the hon. member for Sheffield. Very little, indeed, do you know the spirit you would provoke. I believe that a proposition more calculated to insure

discord could not be imagined, and, therefore, I am prepared to offer just as decided an objection to the proposal of the hon. gentleman, as I am to transfer the revenues to the Roman Catholics. There is another course that may be pursued, not to stand upon compact, not to stand upon authority, not to venture at once to destroy the church, but to take some course for the purpose of undermining and impairing its foundations. I think that course is just as fatal as any other. I think that not to destroy life, but to infuse some slow poison into its veins, which shall ultimately lead to its destruction, is a course as little in unison with religious or social peace as any of the others. Therefore I come to the conclusion, founding myself upon compact, upon authority, and upon the conviction of my mind, that the best course—and the course which I, for one, as far as my humble powers can be exerted, will pursue—is to maintain in its integrity the Protestant Church. When I say in its integrity, I do not mean to exclude all such reforms as may increase the efficiency of its establishment for the purposes of the church; but I do mean that I will neither consent to the overthrow of the church, to the establishment of three forms of religions in Ireland, to the division of the revenues between Protestant, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic; nor can I consent to any of those similar devices which mean nothing, if they do not mean the ultimate destruction of the church. I have stated, therefore, the grounds on which I propose to act with respect to the religious establishment. Does that compel me to exclude altogether from consideration the position of the Roman Catholic Church? Am I to consider that church altogether as an outcast, and to refuse the consideration of any regulations which may improve its condition? Endowment from the state you absolutely reject. We have been assured that the voluntary endowment by individuals might be provided for without any violation of conscience, and would be considered as a great boon. The noble lord, the member for Tiverton, threw out that suggestion in the course of last session. The noble lord, if I mistake not, declared opinions as to a Protestant establishment little different from what I have stated; but at the same time he said he was prepared to treat the Roman Catholic religion with every consideration compatible with the maintenance of the establishment. He desired us in a friendly spirit to consider whether there could be any object to permit voluntary endowment by individuals, Protestant and Roman Catholic, for the purpose of making a provision for Roman Catholics. We professed our readiness to consider the subject, and the moment we profess our readiness to consider it, we are met as usual by the declaration, that it will not be of the slightest advantage, unless brought forward by the right hon. gentleman opposite! Certainly we undertook to consider it, and I believe there were many landed proprietors, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, who would have been disposed, for the sake of promoting peace, for the purpose of improving the condition of Roman Catholic ecclesiastics, to make a voluntary provision for endowment. The absence of such endowment used to be dwelt on as a great grievance. In a work which must be familiar to the right hon. gentleman, "*Scully on the Penal Laws*," he describes the state of the law as to charitable endowments:—"It is, therefore, not too much to affirm," he says, "on a view of all the circumstances, that no person can safely give or grant any land, money, or other property, to or for the permanent support of any Catholic priest, house of worship, school, or charitable edifice, or foundation of any charitable description, subject, as such donation must be, to serious doubts and difficulties. That these donations would be diverted to Protestant institutions, directly contrary to the donor's interest, is a prospect sufficiently discouraging to deter every person from making them. This may be taken to amount to actual and positive prohibition."

The actual and positive prohibition we are willing to remove, accompanied with such securities as may prevent abuse; and certainly I am surprised that our proposition should in this debate have been met in the manner in which it has. We persevere, however, in our intentions, and are perfectly prepared to consider the means. There only remains the subject of education. I must refer to the course which we have taken on the subject of National Education, as sufficiently indicative of our determination to adopt those measures which we believe to be for the welfare of Ireland, even at the risk of offending many of our countrymen. We propose, in the present year, to make a considerable increase to the grant for National Education. I should be very sorry to refuse to consider the means of still further increasing the



revenue. It has been suggested that instruction in the science of agriculture might be usefully given in Ireland, and grafted on the present system of National Education. I should be sorry to exclude the consideration of matters of that sort; I should be very sorry to exclude the consideration of the means of providing some system of academical education for higher classes than those educated in the National Schools; but for the present we intend to give an increased vote, to a considerable extent, for the purpose of National Education. I have now completed what I had to say, and I thank the House for the indulgence. I trust they believe I have only trespassed upon them at such length in the performance of a public duty. I have stated our general views of the policy and of the measures which we propose to adopt. In themselves they may not be immediate and effectual remedies for the evils under which Ireland labours; but I trust at least I have said enough to show the spirit in which the government is prepared to consider the question of Irish legislation. I was reminded by the hon. gentleman, the member for Shrewsbury, in the course of a very able speech which he made the other night, a speech not the less to be admired because it departed from the ordinary routine of parliamentary eloquence, and touched on more comprehensive and general views—I was reminded by him of a declaration which I made, that I thought Ireland was a subject of too much importance to be sacrificed to our party feelings. I say, and say with perfect truth, in a friendly and not in a hostile spirit, that if any gentleman, however attached to the party of the government, should consider that the state of Ireland requires more efficient remedies than we are prepared to adopt, should consider that we are not the instruments by which good can be effected in Ireland—I say, and say it with perfect truth and sincerity, that I think this is a subject of such paramount importance, that all ordinary party considerations should give way, and that any gentleman who thinks that, by a vote hostile to the government, he will be promoting the permanent welfare of Ireland, I give my opinion that in that vote he would be justified. I declare for myself, that upon that opinion I would act, that I would make no sacrifice of judgment, no sacrifice of conscientious feeling to party purposes or personal ambition, where the welfare of that part of the empire is concerned. I think I may say, I have some right to hold that language; I have made sacrifices before for the purpose of restoring peace to Ireland, the least of which was the loss of official power. I have encountered reproaches, the more bitter, because they came from friends and not opponents. I suffered the loss of private friendship and the alienation of private esteem. Why am I not at this moment the cherished representative instead of the rejected candidate of the University of Oxford? When we proposed in 1829 the removal of the Roman Catholic disabilities, the loss of office was a mere secondary consideration, and in the hope of securing peace in Ireland, I sacrificed that which was the greatest distinction I ever aspired to—the representation of that honoured institution, where I had slaked the thirst of early ambition. I am asked, whether I consider the present state of Ireland satisfactory. I confess that I consider it any thing but satisfactory? But I certainly hope that civil government, without resorting to the use of military force, may be maintained in that country. While we retain office, we will maintain the law. We will exert all the authority and power of the Crown—at least we will advise its exercise, and exert the authority of the law temperately, firmly, and moderately—for the purpose of resisting agitation. We hold ourselves not responsible for the increase of military force. We deprecate the necessity for it. We only applied it for the purpose of averting calamities of which we were not the authors. But, having done this, I am bound to admit that this is, I think, an unsatisfactory tenure of power. Our policy has been to maintain peace, to restore friendly relations with great powers, and to increase commerce. We have succeeded in improving the revenue, in restoring the balance between income and expenditure. We have witnessed with the highest satisfaction the gradual improvement of trade, and we trust the revival of prosperity in the commercial and manufacturing districts will be permanent. But at the same time, we cannot but confess, that with this *intestinum et domesticum malum*—this unfortunate condition of Ireland—we cannot look upon the picture with unmingled satisfaction. I trust, however, that that alternative which party suggests—that we are unable to govern Ireland except by force—I trust and believe there is no foundation for that assertion. If indeed party influence be exercised for the pur-

pose of making Ireland ungovernable, it may possibly succeed ; but without the exertion of such party influence, I do not believe that it is impossible to govern Ireland by the ordinary rules by which a country should be governed—with a continuance of the principles which we have always professed. Sir, I see much cause for entertaining bright hopes for the future. By the wonderful applications of science, we are about, I trust, still further to shorten physical distance. I should not be surprised if, even during my own lifetime, we are able by its aid to bring Dublin nearer to London than many towns in England now are. I shall not be surprised, seeing the rapid improvement in science, and in the application of machinery—I shall not, I say, be surprised, if the interval between London and Dublin shall be shortened to twelve hours. You have prospectuses before you, some drawn up by eminent engineers, which contemplate the shortening of that interval to fourteen hours; and my own belief is, that with the progress of improvement the interval will be still further reduced. I cannot help thinking, too, that there is in the higher classes of society a growing disposition to obliterate old partisanship—to forget all animosities. I never hear a debate of the present day upon the state of Ireland, and compare its tone and spirit with those which animated the old debates upon the same subject, without marking the prevalence through the House of a strong disposition to forget differences of opinion, and to obliterate the recollections of the effect which these differences produced. From this side of the House feelings are frequently expressed favourable towards Ireland, and they are met on the other side by many Roman Catholic gentlemen in a spirit corresponding to the temper in which they are uttered. I do earnestly trust that the influence of public opinion, as well as that of the law, may control this agitation—may convince those who are concerned in it, that they are prejudicing the best interests of Ireland—impeding its improvement—preventing the application of capital—and hindering the redress of those grievances which can, I think, be better redressed by the application of individual enterprise, than by almost any legislative interference. Sir, I have the firmest conviction that, if there were calmness and tranquillity in Ireland, there is no part of the British dominions which would make such rapid progress as that country; for I know that there are facilities for improvement—opportunities for improvement, which would make that advance more rapid than that of any other part of our Empire. Sir, I do hope,—and I will conclude by expressing that earnest hope—that this agitation and all its evil consequences may be permitted to cease. I should rejoice—in whatever capacity I may fill, I should consider it the happiest day of my life—when I see the beloved Sovereign of these realms fulfilling the fondest wishes of her heart—of that heart so full of affection to all her people, but mingling that affection with peculiar sympathy and tenderness to Ireland—I should hail the dawning of that auspicious day, when she could alight like some benignant spirit on its shores, and there lay the foundations of a temple of peace; when she could, in accents which, proceeding from the heart, speak to the heart rather than to the ear; when she could call on her Irish subjects, of all classes and of all denominations, Protestant and Catholic, Saxon and Celt, to forget the differences of creed and of race, and to hallow that holy Temple of Peace, of which she laid the foundations—to hallow it with sacrifices, still holier than the sacrifices by which the temples of old were hallowed—to hallow it by the sacrifice of those evil passions which dishonour our common faith, and prevent the union of heart and hand in defence of our common country.

On a division the numbers were, Ayes, 225; Noes, 324; majority, 99.

## HOURS OF LABOUR IN FACTORIES.

MARCH 18, 1844.

The House in committee on the Factories' Bill. On clause 2nd (the interpretation clause) being proposed, Lord Ashley proposed the amendment of which he had given notice: "That the word 'night' shall be taken to mean from six o'clock in the evening to six o'clock in the following morning; and that the word 'meal-time' shall be taken to mean an interval of cessation from work, for the purpose of rest and refreshment, at the rate of two hours a-day; with a view to effect a limitation of the hours of labour to ten in the day."

SIR R. PEEL: I think the committee will be disposed to give credit to her ma-

jesty's government for the motives which have induced them to adhere to the proposition of my right hon. friend, and to offer their decided opposition to the proposition of my noble friend. Of any personal interest in so doing, I apprehend that we shall not be accused, and with respect to party interests, if we wished to consult those interests we should have taken a different course. It is impossible not to feel that we are on this question allied to those who have generally offered to us upon principle the most decided opposition, and that we are opposed, on the other hand, to those who have given the present government a general and almost unvarying support. But there are occasions when it is the duty of a government at all hazards, to oppose measures which it believes to be inconsistent with the permanent interests of the country. It is the first duty of a government to overcome the temptation of obtaining temporary party support, and of conciliating party favour, by acquiescing in a proposition which it conscientiously believes to be injurious to the permanent interests of the country. And influenced by that motive, and by that motive alone, we now discharge the duty of the executive government, and oppose ourselves to the wishes of men whom we highly respect; but whose wishes we believe would, if complied with, be highly injurious to those by whom this measure is urged, and for whose benefit it is intended. There are, or at least there were, until the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fielden) spoke, only two propositions before the committee—namely, the proposition made by her Majesty's government, which imposes restrictions upon the labour of children, which gives new facilities for education to those who have not the power of protecting themselves, and which also arrests the evil where we find it, of the employment of female labour, prohibiting their employment in factories for more than twelve hours a-day, but which imposes no restrictions whatever upon that which is the practical rule as to the employment of adults—granting twelve hours a-day to be the rule as regards adults—that is in no respect interfered with by our proposition for preventing the extension of the evil, by preventing women from being employed more than twelve hours a day. The counter proposition is, that we shall impose restrictions, nominally and theoretically, upon the labour of females and children; but practically and universally, that we shall prevent the labour of male adults, even with their own consent, for a longer period than ten hours. ["Oh, oh!"] The hon. member who spoke last says, that proposition rests with no principle of humanity. I admit, in some respects, that the debate does not turn upon principle. We admit by our proposition, the policy of restricting female labour, and of giving facilities to the education of children. But we do not interfere with adult labour. My noble friend proposes to interfere with adult labour, but he by no means carries his interference so far as the hon. gentleman opposite. The hon. gentleman says there is no reason for ten hours; eight hours is a period which we ought to fix upon for the labour of adults and children, and therefore there would be nothing to prevent hon. gentlemen, if the ten hours' labour bill failed, from agitating for eight. The hon. gentleman is a great authority on the question—he is practically acquainted with labour, and he says the time ought to be eight hours instead of ten. The day, he says, is divided by philosophers into three periods—eight hours for labour, eight hours for recreation, and eight hours for sleep; and he would have us carry out by our laws that division of the day. If the hon. gentleman be right, he would leave ample time for the mother to attend to her domestic duties, and so far he has some argument in favour of his restriction, besides that natural one arising from the division of the day. The hon. gentleman thinks that no good will be effected for the labourer, in consequence of the rapid improvements in machinery, unless eight hours be the time adopted in this bill. But I do not think it necessary that I should now discuss the proposal of the hon. gentleman; and it will be my duty to argue between the proposal for ten hours, and the proposal for twelve hours. Let us first, then, consider to what extent the restriction of the noble lord is to apply. The proposal of the noble lord is, to apply to all labour in cotton, wool, in worsted, in flax, and in silk. Now, the fact is, that at present, and for the last forty years, whenever there has been a demand for those articles, the time of labour has been sixty-nine hours a week. That is now the number of working hours in almost all factories, with the exception of certain branches of the woollen manufacture. [Mr. Hindley: The time does not exceed sixty-nine hours.] That is what I have said.

The time is now sixty-nine hours by the law; and I believe that the universal practice is to work sixty-nine hours a week in the cotton manufactures, worsted manufactures, flax and silk manufactures. There are, however, I believe, some woollen manufactures in which the work is continued for a lesser number of hours; and I have reason to think that the same thing occasionally occurs in certain silk manufactures. But the general practice is to work sixty-nine hours a week; that is to say, twelve hours on the first five days, and nine hours only on Saturdays. My noble friend does not wish to alter the present arrangement with respect to Saturdays. But he proposes that there should be two hours less of labour on each of the other days, or ten hours less in the week; so that we should have fifty-nine hours instead of sixty-nine hours a week of labour in those two great branches of our manufactures, the cotton, the woollen, the linen, and the flax trades. I have seen the last returns of our foreign trade, which show the declared value of the principal articles of British produce and manufacture exported in the last year; and, if I recollect rightly, the value was about £44,000,000 for the principal articles. And what proportion do you suppose that the value of the articles you are now about to deal with bears to the whole amount of £44,000,000? The value of your cotton manufacture, including yarns, amounts to £23,500,000; the value of your linen manufactures amounts to £3,700,000; the value of your silk manufactures amounts to about £664,000; and the value of your woollen manufactures amounts to about £7,500,000; making a total of £35,000,000 out of the £44,000,000 of British manufactures exported, or five-sixths of the whole. So that, by the proposal of my noble friend, five-sixths of the exported manufactures of this country will be subjected to a new law, which is to provide that it shall not be legal to labour at them for more than fifty-nine hours, instead of sixty-nine hours a week. Now, to what extent would that proposal go? There are about 304 to 306 working days in the year, but I shall take the number at 300, in order to facilitate the calculation which I am about to make. The Saturday is to remain untouched, so that the proposal of my noble friend would extend to 250 days a year, which, at the rate of two hours a day, would make 500 hours a year, which my noble friend would take from the time now devoted to manufacturing labour. Those 500 hours would be equivalent to seven weeks; and the result of the proposal would therefore be, that in all cotton, linen, silk, and woollen factories, there would be seven weeks a year less labour than at present. In point of time that is the effect. Your manufacturers, in their several branches exporting £35,000,000 out of £44,000,000 a year, are to enter under your new law into a competition with foreign manufacturers, and you are to enforce upon them the necessity of working seven weeks less in the year than at present. And what says the hon. gentleman, the member for Oldham? He says, that by the Act which we passed last session for permitting the export of machinery, we gave additional advantages to our foreign rivals in competing with our manufacturers. The hon. gentleman has told us that our machinery is now exported, and that our mechanics and artisans are going abroad. Those are advantages which our foreign competitors possess. The hon. gentleman does not propose to repeal the Act which permitted the exportation of our machinery. [Mr. Hindley: I objected to that Act.] You objected to it, and you are a great authority, I dare say; but there is a majority of both Houses of Parliament in favour of the Act, and it will be no consolation to the manufacturers who suffer from this competition, to be told that the hon. gentleman is opposed to the exportation of machinery, unless he can prevail on parliament to alter the law. The hon. gentleman says that the wages of workmen would not be less, if the hours of labour were limited, because there would be a rise in the price of manufactured articles. Why, that certainly would be the natural consequence of restricting the hours of labour and reducing the quantity produced. The amount of manufactured produce would be diminished, prices would rise, and the manufacturers would, it is supposed, be able to give the same rate of wages. But how long would that be the case? By the system which it is proposed that we should pursue, we should give the foreign manufacturer an evident advantage. His material will not be increased in price, and he will come into competition with you, having all the advantages of your machinery when you have raised the price of your manufactures; he will take advantage of that, and you will suffer in the neutral markets, without the power of

compensating yourselves for that increased cost. Suppose the cost of the articles is increased—suppose the establishments are extended—how long does the hon. gentleman think the master manufacturers—the owners of the existing establishments, will be enabled to give the same rate of wages to their workmen? The rise of price may induce new competition; but when that new competition has come into existence in one or two years, does the hon. member think the masters will continue to give increased wages? The hon. gentleman says the manufacturers will be inclined to take advantage of circumstances, and reduce wages to the lowest point. I am not of that opinion. But do you think that they will not try to maintain their profits at the expense of the workman? Is it possible that, under your new enactment for ten hours' labour, the same rate of wages should be given as with a twelve hours' bill? You do not give the same equivalent. Twelve hours' labour have a certain value, and you say the workman shall not have the option of giving more than ten hours. Would it not, then, be repugnant to common sense to suppose—speaking comprehensively—after the lapse of a few months, there being this competition, and the profits on account of foreign rivalry being extremely small, that the master manufacturer will not struggle for the maintenance of his profits, and try to obtain compensation for reduced time of labour, by falling on the workman? Depend upon it, it must be so. The sufferers in this case must be the workmen, who have to give a less amount of the commodity which is that in which they traffic—namely, their labour, than they gave before. If I could think that this would add to the comforts of the workmen, I should be disposed, I think, to relax the strict rules of political economy; but when I heard the other night, the account which the hon. member for Durham gave of the position of the workmen with whom he is connected—when he stated, and I presume he would not state facts which, if not perfectly true, would be so easily capable of contradiction—when I heard him giving instances of workmen earning £91 a year in the enjoyment of comforts, who, he said, he feared to ask whether they received parish relief, because it would have been an insult—when I hear that such is the position of the working masses in this country, I must pause before I give my consent to a measure which is to have the effect of mulcting them of a great part of the wages which they now receive. It is said that we are not to take foreign competition into account. I am told that this is not to be viewed as a commercial question. I am told that it is a question between manumission and mercy. I am to disregard the effect which legislation will have upon the commerce of this country. Why, Sir, if I could separate the two considerations—if the alternative were offered to me of pecuniary gain on the one hand, and the comfort and welfare of the labourer on the other, I should at once decide for the latter; but when we look to the commerce of this country, and the interests bound up with it, it is my duty as a legislator to take that commerce into consideration. Look at the amount of capital expended on the faith of existing laws in cotton manufactures alone—the thousands and tens of thousands congregated together and dependent on them for their support; and look at the consequences which must ensue to these people—not from severe labour, but from the depression of manufacturing prosperity, from the absence of demand for labour. I never shall forget as long I live the situation of Paisley in 1841 and 1842, with 15,000 or 16,000 men out of employ, offering their labour without the means of obtaining an equivalent for it, and depending on charity for support. Did I not see that with a depressed commerce there is an addition to the material sufferings of the people of this country, infinitely greater than could be produced by twelve, thirteen, or fourteen hours of the severest labour? I do not underrate the effects of exacting a great amount of labour, and if my wishes could prevail I would have women employed in labour only eight hours a day. The question, however, does not depend on our wishes and feelings of humanity. It is an entirely different question what I wish, and what it is desirable to attempt to effect by means of peremptory enactments. Therefore, when I say I must consider the commercial view of the subject, it is not by placing the commercial gain in contrast with the comforts of the people; but I say that hundreds and thousands are dependent for food upon the prosperity of our commerce, and if any particular measure tends to increase foreign competition, and to strike a blow at the permanent prosperity of these great branches of industry, I shall rue, when it is too late, the injury I shall

have inflicted upon the working classes of this country by assenting to it. Therefore I repeat that it is utterly impossible I should disregard commerce, and consider humanity and morality alone. It is said, that those who advocate ten hours a day, ask only to establish in these great branches of manufacture an equilibrium of labour, similar to that in other branches of employment, where it is said, ten hours a day is the number. That is the truth with respect to some branches of agricultural labour. At some periods of the year, women certainly do not work in the field more than ten hours; but I think that depends rather on the circumstance that that particular kind of labour cannot be carried on at night, than on any forbearance on the part of employers; because, during the hay and corn harvest more than ten hours' labour are exacted. Should we be content with a law which prescribed ten hours as the period of agricultural labour at all times of the year, in spring and in harvest time? I apprehend such a law would be deemed a severe restriction on agricultural labour; see what would be the effect of such a restriction on cotton spinners. For four years there has been great depression in that trade; the millowner, however, partly from a sense of his own interest hereafter, and partly from humanity, has continued his mill at work, by which he has been losing money. It is necessary that he should do so, or his machinery would get out of repair. He submits to the loss partly in order to give employment to those in his immediate neighbourhood, and partly in the hope that better times will return. A demand for labour follows, with it an opportunity for the master and the man to make up their losses; but your law interposes. You say, "When there is a period of depression, I expect you to continue your machinery at work although it may be unproductive of profit—pay low wages, just sufficient to support life and keep the labourer from starvation; but when a demand for labour arrives, I will make it impossible either for master or man to make up for lost time, or go beyond a certain amount of profit which my law fixes." I doubt the justice of such an enactment; I doubt whether it is for the advantage of the manufacturer, and I am sure it is not for the advantage of the man and his family, who by this interposition finds 30 or 25 per cent. taken from the £91 a year, which but for that law he might have earned. What is this but levying a tax of 15 or 25 per cent. on capital and labour. I call upon the House to recollect what was thought of an imposition of 3 per cent., and to compare this with a permanent imposition of even 15 per cent. on the profit of capital and the wages of labour. I doubt whether the workmen do not cherish the hope that this restriction will not in its effects fall on them, but I believe the loss to the manufacturer will be much less than to the labourers; for the former will be able to obtain compensation by making reductions; but I doubt whether, by restricting the hours of labour, you will give the workmen an equivalent for the loss of 15 per cent. You are going to apply this restriction to certain branches of labour, which are at your mercy, because they are congregated in large factories, and brought under your eye. I am now speaking on the assumption, that this limitation is not necessary to be equally applied to other branches of industry; but never was assumption more erroneous. There are great branches of industry as to which greater necessity exists for interference than in the cotton manufacture. We should perhaps interfere there, but we cannot. "Why should we not," it is said, "notwithstanding, correct an evil which is tangible, and as to which we can apply a remedy because there is another which we cannot? Let us restrict labour where we can apply our laws; at any rate, we do no harm if we leave untouched other departments of industry, as to which we have no facilities for legislation." That is not a well-founded argument. After I have applied restrictions to one species of capital invested in a description of labour, I do not leave matters where I found them. I give a premium on that labour which I leave unrestricted; and I disturb the application of capital by subjecting capital applied to manufactures to peculiar and special restrictions, and by giving a premium on the application of capital to those employments which are not fettered by such legislation. What are those descriptions of employment I leave untouched by such legislation? Agriculture I put out of the question. It is said I cannot touch agricultural labour. I must say, however, that if I could carry my own wishes into effect, I would prohibit a great deal of agricultural work carried on by women through the middle of winter, without reference to the inclemency of the

weather. That women should be working from eight to ten hours, with no opportunity to change their raiment upon occasions, is surely sufficient reason for me to desire to protect them, and, if I could, to leave them to domestic engagements; and certainly, if I could by a wish effect this without injuring other interests, I should be disposed to do so. But I speak of labour employed in agriculture. I am going to restrict one species and to leave untouched another. What is the other species? Is it some small and unimportant department of employment? No. It includes the metal manufacture, the ironmongery, the japan, the tin wire, the screw, the nail, the pin-manufacture, every thing passing under the name of Sheffield or Birmingham ware; earthenware, porcelain, glass, lace, hosiery, calico-printing, bleaching and dyeing, paper-manufacture, rope and twine-making, leather-glove making, steel-plating, and, above all, dress-making and needle-work. I am not going to touch these departments of industry. I am going to leave to the master in these manufactures the unfettered right to employ women and children at whatever period he pleases. Now, I wish you could read the report of the commissioners on the employment of children in several branches of trade and manufactures, which has been laid on the table within the last two years. By adopting this proposition, the House could only hold out a new inducement to give employment to women and children in other branches of trade and manufactures in contradistinction of the cotton manufacture. The commissioners in their report state:—"That in a very large proportion of these trades and manufactures, female children are employed equally with boys, and at the same tender ages; in some, indeed, the number of girls exceeds that of boys; and in a few cases the work, as far as it is performed by those under adult age, is carried on almost entirely by girls and young women."

Now I dare to say, that a great number of gentlemen who hear me, are not aware of the number of women and children engaged in some particular branches of manufacture, which it is generally supposed are chiefly carried on by men. This has struck me as being particularly the case in the manufactures of metal. One of the sub-commissioners said, "I saw in some manufactories women employed in most laborious work, such as stamping buttons and brass nails, and notching the heads of screws. These are certainly unfit operations for women. In screw manufactories the females constitute from 80 to 90 per cent. of the whole number employed. Thus:—Mr. James James, screw manufacturer states, that he employs about 60 men and 300 females. In the screw manufactory of Messrs. J. Hawkins and Co. there are 30 men and 102 women. Mr. S. Henu, foreman of Messrs. F. H. Hyland and Co., screw-manufacturers, states that he has been in the screw-manufactory all his life; that in screw-making few children are employed—not more than 5 in 100. That the great majority of the workpeople are females, as many as 90 per cent.; and that some girls came as young as thirteen or fourteen, but generally from sixteen to twenty-three or twenty-four."

Again, it appears that the number of females engaged in the manufacture of earthenware is very great. It is stated in the report, "From the returns received from Staffordshire it appears that, of the total number of workpeople employed in the principal establishments, the females above twenty-one years of age are considerably more than one-third; between twenty-one and thirteen, the number of the females nearly equals that of the males; and under thirteen the number of the girls is much more than one-half that of the boys; the exact proportions being, above twenty-one years of age, females 2,648, males 4,544; between twenty-one and thirteen, females 1,736, males 1,979; and under thirteen, females 522, males 978."

Why do I quote these things? Because I wish to show you that it is impossible to stop in your legislation; that there is at least the same necessity, that there is a much greater necessity for your interference in respect to other branches of manufactures, than in the case of cotton factories; that if you stop at factories, you are giving encouragement to other branches of manufactures, which are not to be so protected; and if you do not stop there, I advise you to contemplate the extent of your legislation, if we are to undertake the regulation of all labour in respect to which females are employed, and in which excessive tasks are required. Take a branch of manufactures closely allied with the cotton—that of calico-printing, or take the earthenware manufacture, as to both of which there is abundant informa-

- tion as to the employment of women and children in those departments of manufacture. With respect particularly to the manufacture of plates and saucers, in the report of the commissioners to which I have just referred, is this statement: "But the children most to be commiserated are those called 'jiggers and mould-runners,' who are employed by the dish, saucer, and plate makers. Each man employs two boys, one to turn the jigger or horizontal wheel, the other to carry the ware from the whirler to the hot-house on moulds. The children thus employed constantly work in a temperature ranging from 100 to 130 degrees. A man frequently makes eight score dozen saucers in a week, each dozen counting thirty-six pieces; each piece is carried twice to the hot-house, and weighs, mould and bat, 2lbs.; but as two pieces are carried at the same time, they count but as one; that is to say, 4lbs. each trip. A child carries in the week, reckoning his working hours at 7,223,040lbs., or 3,840 lbs. each day. In carrying this weight he journeys 45 miles 1,440 yards every week, or seven miles, 1,120 yards per day. Besides this, he has to mount one, two, or three steps to place the pieces on the shelves, to wedge the clay in the yard, while his master is taking his pipe or his pot; to collect the half-dried pieces from the shelves; to come half an hour or more before his master in the morning to get coals in and ashes out, and to sweep and make the room ready, and to do any thing else that may be wanted, having probably to walk a mile before and after his work."

Such is the nature of the employment in a particular branch of the earthenware manufacture, in which large numbers of females and children are engaged. Now, hon. gentlemen ask, what are the hours of work? The report states that the hours of work in the earthenware manufactories are seldom less than twelve, and that, at the end of the week, in plate-making, the work lasts from six in the morning until nine at night, which makes fifteen hours, and that it very often extends from seventeen to eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. I ask, then, whether the House will only interfere with the cotton manufacturer, and leave earthenware and calico-printing in the same state as at present. If I had not seen the statements in this report, resting on such high authority, I never could have believed it possible that in this country there were human beings who had to undergo such a continuance of human labour as is exacted from those who are engaged in calico-printing. In the report from which I have already quoted, it is stated in the evidence of Thomas Sidbread, block-printer, that after taking a child who had already been at work all day to assist him as a teerer through the night, says:—"We began to work between eight and nine o'clock on the Wednesday night; but the boy had been sweeping the shop from Wednesday morning. You will scarcely believe it, but it is true—I never left the shop till six o'clock on the Saturday morning, and I had never stopped working all that time, excepting for an hour or two, and that boy with me all the time. I was knocked up, and the boy was almost insensible; if I stopped a minute, he was fast asleep in a moment. On the Friday I was printing a piece, and the block did not exactly fit the pattern, so I sent the boy to fasten the piece to a post at the other end of the room, that I might stretch it; he was so sleepy that he took the piece across where the other men were working, which he would never have done if he had been properly awake. However, he fell asleep in the act of doing this, and let go his hold of the end of the piece when I was leaning my weight upon it, and I fell down an open staircase which was at my back, and hurt myself very much. I did not recover it for some time. This child's parents neglected to give him food, and the people I lodged with had not taken care to prepare me enough, so we were obliged to go without food from dinner-time one day until breakfast the next day, as I dared not send the boy for any food, as I was afraid he would give me the slip and run away, and I could not get another; so we both went without food all that time. They worked regularly very long hours; it was quite a regular thing with them. There were men there, and children too, who came on a Monday morning and stayed till Saturday night, slept and ate their food there."

Again, Henry Richardson, block-printer states:—"At four o'clock I began to work, and worked all that day, all the next night, and until ten o'clock the following day. I had only one teerer during that time, and I dare say he would be about twelve years old. I had to shout to him towards the second night, as he got sleepy. I had one of my own children, about ten years old, who was a teerer. He worked with me at Messrs. Wilson and Crichton's, at Blakeley. We began to work



together about two or three in the morning, and left off at four or five in the afternoon. Once I remember going on a Friday morning at two o'clock, working all Friday and Friday night, and until twelve o'clock on Saturday. On Saturday night I sent the child to bed about seven o'clock; the next morning, when the other children got up, I told them to let him lie still a bit, as he had had so little rest during the week. We never disturbed him at breakfast-time, and when we returned from chapel at noon, he was still asleep, and slept during dinner-time. About five o'clock in the afternoon, when I came home from the school, I was alarmed at finding him still asleep, and wakened him; but I believe, if I had not done so, he would have slept until Monday morning. I have known children made ill by working too long hours. The boy that worked for me at the Adelphi, was sometimes unable to come to his work from being sick with overworking; and I have known him give another lad his supper, to take a night's turn for him; and he often had no appetite of his own."

Robert Kellatt, block-printer, said:—"I remember, either in August or September last, I started at six o'clock one morning, and it was one o'clock the following morning when I went out of the shop; as I was going out, the foreman called me back, and ordered me to return by six o'clock. I came again at six in the morning, after being away five hours, and worked until nine o'clock at night, when the foreman came again to me to see if I could make it convenient to be back again at twelve o'clock at night; but I did not go, as I considered it rather unfeeling in them to expect me to do so, for my own child had worked with me all those hours, and she was but eleven years old.—Did any of the men who were working with you return at twelve o'clock? Yes, there were three men; but they had not been employing their own children as teerers, and they came back at twelve, and worked till twelve the next day."

Let hon. members read these and other descriptions of the occupation of persons engaged in the metal trade, the earthenware manufacture, calico-printing, lace manufacture, and the hosiery trade, and above all, read in this report the account of the nature of the occupation of the dress-makers and milliners in this metropolis, and then ask themselves if these trades do not as much call for the intervention of parliament as the cotton manufacture? Is it right, then, to deal only with this one branch of industry, and leave others altogether untouched, in which it appears that female children work fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, or even as much as eighteen hours a day? If you are prepared to legislate for them [Hear],—you are then prepared to legislate for them; and we are about to subject, not factory labour merely, but all labour in this country that falls at all within the same principle, to similar restrictions. We are not merely to interdict the employment of women in mines and collieries, but we are about to provide regulations which shall apply to children, and which ought to apply to adults, in respect to all descriptions of labour, where we think it is more severe than the human frame ought to be subjected to. This principle I certainly understand. If this then, be only the commencement of the work, I cannot make any objection to it as being an unjust interference with particular classes of labour; but if, as it seems now the impression—and perhaps the just one—that the imposition of these restrictions upon adult labour, will engender the necessity of further restrictions applicable to all labour, and I see not why it should not be extended to agricultural labour—I say that, because you adopt the principle that necessarily leads to such extensive consequences, namely an invariable and almost universal interference with labour in this country, before I adopt that principle, although I admit the universality of its application, and that it is not inconsistent with justice as showing a preference to no one description of labour over another, yet foreseeing that I should be involved in a duty which I never shall be able satisfactorily to perform—seeing, although it is possible, perhaps, to deal with the factories, yet if I am to enter into private shops and houses, and impose obligations upon every individual as to the degree of labour he shall impose, not upon 300 or 400 children, but upon two or three members of his family whom he employs—if I am to be involved in such a difficult, and, as I think, such a perilous enterprise—if I am to undertake the duty of prescribing and legislating, not merely how long the steam-engine shall work (for that I can effect), but if I am to inculcate in every private establishment and every private family the duties of humanity, I am involved in a task above all human

strength, and, as I believe, pregnant with great injustice to individuals. I know my wishes and feelings would be as much in accordance with effecting that object as lessening the labour in the case of factories. I should like to see the father more proud of the education, and instruction, and moral training of his children, than anxious to increase his earnings by their labour. Can I effect it by law? If I once undertake it, I must not be deterred by the difficulty of legislating for individual cases. The more I extend my legislation—if I go from factories to earthenware, from earthenware to hosiery, and from hosiery to lace, that which I leave unrestricted I am giving fresh encouragement to. It is not the magnitude of the establishment I shall have to contend with, because if I carry out the principle fully and fairly, I must descend into all the details of daily occupation. It is admitted, that the first principle of undue interference involves that extent of interference. What may be the effect, then, on the general employment of the country of such an attempt? I know it is pregnant with the most important consequences. After legislation shall have been effected, and these new restrictions imposed, depend upon it, that is not the close of your legislation. I see full well what other consequences must follow; and believing that upon the whole we have attempted as much of legislation on these great branches of manufacture as it is now wise and safe to attempt, for the commerce and manufactures of the country, and above all, for the interests and comforts of the working classes—dreading the consequences of imposing the proposed restrictions on adult labour—saying to the man, “Whatever be your inclinations, the amount of your work and your earnings shall be limited”—admitting that the debate does not turn on the principle, but believing that the interference we suggest, which has been sanctioned by the proposal of former legislators who had well considered the subject, is all that can safely be attempted in respect of this branch of manufacture—believing, above all, that the forcible restriction upon labour to the extent of preventing the adult, in the cotton factory, in the silk factory, in the lace and woollen trade, from labouring more than ten hours—whatever may be my sympathies and my feelings, regardless of being in a majority or in a minority, having no other motive in my conscience than that of promoting what, in my belief, is most consistent with the public interest, I cannot and will not acquiesce in the proposal of my noble friend, forcibly to limit labour in factories to ten hours in the day.

Lord Ashley's amendment was negatived by a majority of 9, and on the 29th of March the bill was withdrawn.

## BANK CHARTER—THE CURRENCY.

MAY 6, 1844.

The House having resolved itself into a committee on the Bank of England Charter Act—

SIR ROBERT PEEL rose, and addressing Mr. Greene, who was in the chair, said—Sir, there are occasional questions of such vast and manifest importance, and which prefer such a claim, I should rather say such a demand, on the attention of the House, that all rhetorical prefaces, dilating on their magnitude or enjoining the duty of patient consideration, are superfluous and impertinent. I shall, therefore, proceed at once to call the attention of this committee to a matter which enters into every transaction of which money forms a part. There is no contract, public or private, —no engagement, national or individual, which is unaffected by it. The enterprises of commerce, the profits of trade, the arrangements made in all the domestic relations of society, the wages of labour, pecuniary transactions of the highest amount and of the lowest, the payment of the national debt, the provision for the national expenditure, the command which the coin of the smallest denomination has over the necessities of life, are all affected by the decision to which we may come on that great question which I am about to submit to the consideration of the committee. The circumstances under which the duty imposed on me arises are shortly these:—In the year 1833, an act of parliament passed which continued to the Bank of England certain privileges until the year 1855, and after the year 1855 until parliament should determine to give one year's notice to the bank of its determination to revise the charter. Before, however, the expiration of the full period of twenty-one years,

before the arrival of that term of 1855, there was reserved to parliament the power after the lapse of ten years, by notice to be given to the bank, of revising the charter and reconsidering this whole subject. That period will arrive in August next. After August next it will be competent to this House, by notice given through the speaker, to intimate to the bank that within six months next following this House will reconsider the charter of the Bank of England. If that opportunity be let pass, the charter of the bank and all the privileges it confers will endure until the year 1855. In the present state of this country—in the present state of the currency—after the inquiries which have been instituted, after the degree to which public attention has been called to this subject, her Majesty's government feel it to be their duty to avail themselves of the opportunity thus given to them by law, and to consider the revision of the charter of the bank. They are of opinion, that inquiry has been exhausted—that all the information which is essential to the formation of a satisfactory judgment has been collected, and that it is incumbent on the ministers of the Crown to submit to the decision of parliament the measures which in their opinion it may be fitting to adopt. Sir, I am perfectly satisfied that the members of this House, rising superior to all party considerations, and to all private interests, will consider it their duty to apply their deliberate and impartial consideration to this great subject. I have that confidence in the House of Commons, from past experience of their superiority to mere party views and personal interests where matters of such paramount importance come under review, that I feel assured such will be the course they will pursue on this occasion. I ask you to-night for no decision. I would even deprecate the expression of opinion. I ask you to listen to the proposals I shall make—to hear the evidence and arguments by which they shall be supported—to read and consider the resolutions which I shall move, *pro forma*; and, after having deliberated maturely on the subject, hereafter to pronounce a cool and impartial judgment upon it. Sir, I am not shaken in the confidence I repose in the House by publications I have seen, inviting the attendance of members on this occasion. I hold in my hand the resolutions adopted at a meeting of the general committee of private country bankers on the 17th of April last. They are to this effect: "That the refusal of government to give information on the subject of their measure concerning banks and issue, naturally leads to the conclusion, that it is their intention to propose some measure affecting country banks generally, and this meeting considers it most probable that it relates to the local circulation of the country." "That under these circumstances it is most desirable that the banks of issue, whether private or joint-stock banks, should unite to oppose any alteration in the local circulation of the country, or in the conditions on which it is now allowed by law; and that the several joint-stock banks and banks of issue throughout the United Kingdom be invited to co-operate with the private bankers in such opposition." The third resolution is, "That all bankers be requested, as far as possible, to bring the question fully under the consideration of all members of parliament with whom they may be acquainted or connected, and endeavour to induce them to oppose any such alterations in the local circulation of the country." Sir, I complain not of these resolutions. I complain not, at least, that the bankers have invited members of parliament to attend in their place and consider this subject; but I do hope that members of parliament will resist the subsequent appeal, and that they will not come here determined beforehand to oppose any alteration in the existing law which may be proposed for their consideration. Are you so satisfied with the existing state of things,—are you so convinced that it is utterly impossible in any particular to suggest alteration, that you will come prepared, before hearing the discussion on the subject, to offer, after previous concert and understanding, an insuperable obstacle to any amendment of the existing law? I know that to be impossible. I hold in my hand the proof of evils flowing from the present state of the law, which should make it impossible that any such previous compact and understanding, if entered into, could be fulfilled. My immediate proposition relates to banking concerns, and to the issue of promissory notes; but, considering that ten years have now elapsed since this subject was brought under consideration, I hope I shall be excused if I take a wider range than the immediate questions for decision might seem to justify, and if I advert at the outset to the great principles which govern, or ought to govern, the measure of value, and the medium of exchange. They lie, in truth, at the very foundation of

our discussion. We cannot hope to agree on the measure to be adopted with regard to paper currency, unless we are agreed on the principles which determine the value of that of which paper is the representative, and on the nature of the obligation which is imposed upon the issuer of promissory notes. Now, I fear there is not a general agreement on those fundamental principles—that there is still a very material difference of opinion as to the real nature and character of the measure of value in this country. My first question therefore is, what constitutes this measure of value? What is the signification of that word “a pound,” with which we are all familiar? What is the engagement to pay a “pound?” Unless we are agreed on the answer to these questions, it is in vain we attempt to legislate on the subject. If a “pound” is a mere visionary abstraction, a something which does not exist either in law or in practice, in that case one class of measures relating to paper currency may be adopted; but if the word “pound” the common denomination of value, signifies something more than a mere fiction—if a “pound” means a quantity of the precious metals of certain weight and certain fineness—if that be the definition of a “pound,” in that case another class of measures relating to paper currency will be requisite. Now, the whole foundation of the proposal I am about to make rests upon the assumption that according to practice, according to law, according to the ancient monetary policy of this country, that which is implied by the word “pound” is a certain definite quantity of gold with a mark upon it to determine its weight and fineness, and that the engagement to pay a pound means nothing, and can mean nothing else, than the promise to pay to the holder, when he demands it, that definite quantity of gold. What is the meaning of the “pound” according to the ancient monetary policy of this country? The origin of the term was this:—In the reign of William the Conqueror a pound weight of silver was also the pound of account. The “pound” represented both the weight of metal and the denomination of money. By subsequent debasements of the currency a great alteration was made, not in the name, but in the intrinsic value of the pound sterling, and it was not until a late period of the reign of Queen Elizabeth that silver, being then the standard of value, received that determinate weight which it retained without variation, with constant refusals to debase the standard of silver, until the year 1816, when gold became the exclusive standard of value. The standard of silver was fixed about 1567; but in 1717, the value of the guinea was determined to be 21s., and for a certain period, both gold and silver constituted the mixed standard of value. In the year 1774, it being then enacted that no legal contract should be discharged in silver for any sum of more than £25, gold became substantially the measure of value, and so it continued to be legally and practically until 1797, when that fatal measure for restricting cash payments by the bank was passed, and parties were enabled to issue at their discretion paper money not convertible into coin at the will of the bearer. From 1797 to 1810 public attention was not much directed to this important subject; but in 1810 men of sagacity observed that the exchanges had been for a considerable period unfavourable to this country—more unfavourable than could be accounted for by the balance of trade or the monetary transactions of the country. A committee was appointed to inquire into the subject, and opinions, not really novel, but at that time very startling, were enounced, to the effect that the “pound” meant, in fact, nothing else than a definite quantity of the precious metals, and that those who promised to pay a pound ought to pay that quantity. That theory was very much contested at the time. The House of Commons was not convinced by the arguments used in favour of it. The public mind, confused by the practice that had prevailed since the issue of inconvertible paper, would not admit the doctrine of a metallic standard. Those who contested it were, however, called upon to give their definition of the pound sterling, and it must be admitted that they responded to the call. They did not evade the question, as is now the practice, by writing long and unintelligible pamphlets, but, confident in their own theories, gave, in brief and compendious forms, their definitions of the standard of value. (One writer said, “that a pound might be defined to be a sense of value in reference to currency as compared with commodities.” Another writer was dissatisfied with that definition, thinking the public had a right to something more definite and tangible, and that the meaning of “a reference to currency as compared with commodities,” was not very obvious to enlightened minds. This writer said, “There

is a standard and there is an unit which is the measure of value, and that unit is the interest of £33:6:8 at 3 per cent., that being £1, and being paid in a Bank-note as money of account." The last definition of the standard of value which I shall quote is this:—"The standard is neither gold nor silver, but it is something set up in the imagination, to be regulated by public opinion." Such were the absurdities into which ingenious men were betrayed, in the attempt to set up some other standard of value, more consistent with inconvertible paper than a metallic standard. It was supposed at that time that the doctrines propounded by the bullion committee were the visionary speculations of theorists, and were unknown in the former monetary history of this country. But that is not the case. Refer to every writer of eminence—to Mr. Locke, to Sir W. Petty, to any one who wrote before 1797, and who had not been familiar with inconvertible paper currency, and you will find they arrive at precisely the same conclusions with the bullion committee. Take the opinion of Mr. Harris, an officer of the Mint, and an eminent writer on the subject a century before the Bank Restriction act:—

"In all countries (says Mr. Harris) there is established a certain standard both as to weight and fineness of the several species of those coins.

"In England, the silver monies are to contain 111 parts of fine silver, and 6 parts of alloy. That is, the pound troy with us contains 11 oz. 2 pennyweights of fine silver, and 18 pennyweights of alloy; and of a pound troy of this standard silver, our money pound contains  $\frac{2}{3}$  parts, that is to say a pound of this silver is coined into 62s. This standard has continued invariable ever since the 43rd Elizabeth.

"By the standard of money is always meant the quantity of pure or fine metal contained in a given sum. In England accounts are kept by the pound sterling, which is a certain quantity of fine silver appointed by law for a standard." (He was writing at a time when silver was the standard in England.) "All payments abroad are regulated by the course of exchange, and that is founded upon the intrinsic value, and not on the mere names of coins.

"We may break the public faith here, and curtail the long-established measure of property; but foreigners will make ample allowance for what we may do, and however we may rob and cheat one another, will secure themselves, and make an advantage of our discredit, by bringing the exchange against us beyond the part."

These are the true doctrines as to the measure of value, doctrines delivered one hundred years before the Report of the bullion committee was made, but in precise conformity with that Report. The truth of them is not, I fear, even now admitted. Publications daily issue from the press contesting it. Here is a volume published at Birmingham since the commencement of the present year, not the production, I presume, of a single author, for it professes to be written by Gemini. I have no wish to withhold justice from writers who give that proof of their sincerity, which is implied by the publication of an octavo volume. And I admit at once, that I do not believe this work could have proceeded from any other town in the Queen's dominions than Birmingham, and that the efforts of no single writer are equal to the production of so much nonsense. This volume collects and repeats all the old exploded fallacies on the subject of the standard of value and the currency. Its authors bewail the darkness of the age which adheres to a standard which was adopted in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and which they consider wholly unsuitable as a measure of value now, considering the extent of our commerce, and the increase of all pecuniary transactions in number and amount. They might with equal justice complain, that since travelling has been increased by the completion of railways, the foot measure is still adhered to. There is no better reason for making the sovereign pass for twenty-five shillings instead of twenty, than for making the foot consist of sixteen inches instead of twelve. They consider it absurd, that with the progress we have made in wealth and knowledge, we should still coin the ounce of gold into a sum represented by £3, 17s. 10½d. "Coin the ounce of gold," say they, "into £5, and we shall then have relief from our burthens, and encouragement to industry and trade." Now, let us consider what is meant by affixing to the ounce of gold a value, represented in coin by the sum of £3:17:10½? According to the regulations of the Mint, before the alteration of the silver coin in 1816, a pound weight of standard gold was coined into 44½ guineas; a pound weight of standard silver was coined into 62s.; and a guinea was

made current for 21s. We are thus enabled to calculate the relative value of gold and silver according to the Mint regulations. The sum of  $44\frac{1}{2}$  guineas in gold, that is a pound of gold, was equivalent to 1,869 sixpences in silver, and the pound of silver being equal to 124 sixpences in coin, the value of gold was to that of silver as 1,839 to 124, or as  $15\frac{1}{4}$  to 1. The ounce of gold in coin was equivalent to the corresponding amount in silver, namely, the twelfth part of 1,869 sixpences, that is to say, to 155 sixpences and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a shilling, or £3 : 17 :  $10\frac{1}{2}$ . There was, indeed, a small difference in the amount of alloy in a pound of coined gold and a pound of coined silver, for which it is necessary to make allowance, and that allowance being made, the relative value of pure gold to pure silver in the coins of the two metals was as  $15\frac{285}{344}$  to 1. Silver has ceased to be a standard of value, and the silver coin being now a mere token, the former relative value of gold coin to silver coin is not now preserved. The above calculations explain our meaning when we say that the ounce of gold is coined into the sum of £3 : 17 :  $10\frac{1}{2}$ . These terms express the relation of gold and silver coin, according to the Mint regulations at the time that silver coin was made of standard silver. You may now enact, no doubt, that the ounce of gold shall be coined into £5 in money of account, that is to say, you may debase the standard to that extent. And what will be the effect of this? All debtors will no doubt gain by it. In the case of all unfulfilled contracts, he who has to receive payment will receive much less in point of real value than he stipulated for. The creditor will be defrauded—the debtor will have a corresponding advantage. But this will be the whole effect. No new transaction will be affected by your choosing to call an ounce of gold £5. As Mr. Harris says, you may cheat each other at home, but foreign countries will adjust their dealings with you, not on account of the name to be given to your coin, but according to its real value. All new contracts at home will be regulated by the same principles. The real and not the nominal value of that which is made by law the medium of exchange, will regulate prices and all future contracts. Even the relative value of gold and silver will not be adjusted by your laws. You may insist on coining the ounce of gold into £5 instead of £3 : 17 :  $10\frac{1}{2}$ , that is to say, into 200 sixpences, instead of, as at present, into 155 sixpences and fourpence halfpenny, but silver will disobey your law, and will insist on finding its own value in the market on principles which you cannot control. The Mint regulations do not, it is true, correctly express the present relative value of gold and silver in the bullion market. Silver is not worth 5s. 2d. an ounce, not more, I believe, than 5s. an ounce, and there would be an apparent present advantage to the debtor in taking silver rather than gold as the standard, since the relative value of gold to silver when standard-silver is 5s. per ounce, is as 15.575 to 1, instead of  $15\frac{285}{344}$  to 1. But there is reason to doubt whether those who wish for a relaxation of the standard, and who, for the purpose of benefiting the debtor, recommend either a joint standard of silver and gold, or the substitution of silver for gold as the standard, would attain their object were either of those measures adopted. There is reason to believe, adverting particularly to the rapid increase of the annual supply of gold from mines within the dominions of the Emperor of Russia, that the value of gold in the general markets of the world is on the decrease, and that the interest of the debtor would not be permanently advanced by the abandonment of gold for silver as the standard of value in the country. But to revert to the errors of those who are the advocates of some measure of value other than the precious metals. They object to the selection of gold as the standard of value, because gold is an article of commerce,—because there is a demand for it as bullion, affecting, therefore, its value as coin, and disqualifying it to be the measure of value. Now, no one contends that there is or can be an absolutely fixed and invariable standard of value. No one denies that the value of gold, with reference to all commodities, excepting gold itself, may be subject to slight variations. But what other substance is not more subject to variations in value than the precious metals? What other substance possessing intrinsic value will not always be in demand as an article of commerce? It is because gold is an article of commerce, because there are no restrictions upon its export or its import, that you can at all times depend upon such a supply of gold for the purposes of coin as may be sufficient for the wants of this country. The

precious metals are distributed among the various countries of the world in proportion to their respective necessities, by laws of certain though not very obvious operation, which, without our interference, will allot to our share all that we require. Some entertain the apprehension that we may be drained of all our gold in consequence of a demand for gold from foreign countries, either for the payment of their armies in time of war, or in consequence of sudden and unforeseen demand for foreign corn for our own internal consumption. It is supposed that gold, being an article in universal demand, and having at all times and in all places an ascertained value, is more subject to exportation than anything else. But the export of gold, whether coin or bullion, is governed by precisely the same laws by which the export of any other article is governed. Gold will not leave this country unless gold be dearer in some other country than it is in this. It will not leave this country, merely because it is gold, nor while there is any article of our produce or manufacture which can be exported in exchange for foreign produce with a more profitable return. If gold coin be in any country the common medium of exchange; or if the promissory notes, which perform in part the functions of gold coin, are at all times and under all circumstances of equal value with gold, and are instantly convertible into gold, there are causes in operation which, without any interference on our part, will confine within known and just limits the extent to which gold can be exported. There may no doubt be temporary pressure from the export of gold, even when it is confined within those limits; but none for which you may not provide, none to which you would not be subject, in a higher degree probably, were any other standard of value adopted in preference to gold. I have thus stated the grounds which justify the conclusion, that, according to the ancient monetary policy of the country, according to the law, according to the practice that prevailed at all times, excepting during the period of inconvertible paper currency, a certain quantity of the precious metals, definite in point of weight and fineness, has constituted, and ought to constitute, the measure of value. The minds of men, habituated during the bank restriction to a departure from that measure of value, were loth to admit those great elementary truths which are at the foundation of the whole system of currency, paper credit, and foreign exchange. Ingenious writers have from time to time laboured to prove the unsoundness of these doctrines, to show that a metallic standard was neither practically nor theoretically the measure of value in this country, and have cited various facts apparently irreconcilable with the theory. But when all the circumstances attending each fact have been fully stated, they have been sufficient to account for the seeming contradiction. When Sir Isaac Newton had established the planetary system on the principle of gravitation and attraction, there were phenomena apparently at variance with the theory. But succeeding philosophers, starting from the point which in the progress of science had been reached by Sir Isaac Newton, applying his principles with improved means of investigating truth, solved the doubts which he had not been able to solve, and showed that the apparent contradictions, when all the disturbing influences were taken into account, became in fact new demonstrations of the soundness of the original theory. And the same result has followed, and will follow, in the case of objections which have been, and will continue to be, urged against the principle of the metallic standard. It must at the same time be admitted that it would be quite consistent with that principle to adopt some other measure of value than that which we have adopted. It would be consistent with that principle to select silver instead of gold as the standard,—to have a mixed standard of gold and silver, the relative values of the two metals being determined,—to dispense with gold coin altogether, and regulate the amount and value of paper currency by making it convertible only, according to the proposal of Mr. Ricardo, into gold bullion of a given minimum amount. I trust, however, this House will adhere to the present standard,—will resolve on the maintenance of a single standard, and of gold as that standard. All the great writers on this subject, Sir William Petty, Mr. Locke, Mr. Harris, and Lord Liverpool, have been decidedly in favour of a single, in preference to a double standard. Mr. Locke, indeed, was of opinion that silver ought to be the standard; but there appears good ground to doubt the soundness of that opinion; and there are, at any rate, the most cogent reasons since gold has been for a long course of years the standard in this country, for the continued maintenance of it. They are well stated in the admirable treatise on coins,

written by the first Lord Liverpool. In that treatise a system of coinage is recommended, which is in exact conformity, both in point of principle and detail, with the system which we have adopted. Lord Liverpool observes:—

“After full consideration of this extensive, abstruse, and intricate subject, I humbly offer to your majesty, as the result of my opinion,

“First, That the coins of this realm, which are to be the principal measure of property and instrument of commerce, should be made of one metal only.

“Secondly, That in this kingdom the gold coins only have been for many years past, and are now, in the practice and opinion of the people, the principal measure of property and instrument of commerce.

“It has been shown that, in a country like Great Britain, so distinguished for its affluence and for the extent of its commercial connections, the gold coins are best adapted to be the principal measure of property; in this kingdom, therefore, the gold coin is now the principal measure of property and standard coin, or, as it were, the sovereign archetype by which the weight and value of all other coins should be regulated.

“It is the measure of almost all contracts and bargains; and by it, as a measure, the price of all commodities bought and sold is adjusted and ascertained. For these reasons the gold coin should be made as perfect and kept as perfect as possible.

“Thirdly, It is evident, that where the function of the gold coins as a measure of property ceases, there that of the silver coins should begin; and that where the function of the silver coins, in this respect, ceases, there that of copper should begin: it is clear, therefore, that so far only these silver and copper coins should be made legal tender and no further, at least not in any great degree; and it follows that the coins, both of silver and copper, are subordinate, subservient, and merely representative coins; and must take their value with reference to the gold coins according to the rate which the sovereign sets upon each of them.”

These are, in fact, the principles which regulate our present coinage. We have a single standard, and that standard gold,—the metal which was practically the standard for many years previously to the suspension of cash payment. The silver coin is a mere token, auxiliary and subordinate to the gold coin; the ounce of silver being now coined into 66*s.* instead of 62*s.*, and silver coin not being a legal tender for any greater sum than 40*s.* By the abolition, in this part of the United Kingdom, of the promissory notes below £5, you introduce the gold coin into general use for the purpose of effecting small payments; you enable the holder of the smallest note to demand payment in gold, and thus ensure the maintenance of a very considerable quantity of gold as a part of the circulating medium. There is, no doubt, some expense in the maintenance of a metallic circulation, but none, in my opinion, sufficient to countervail the advantage of having gold coin generally distributed throughout the country, accessible to all, and the foundation of paper credit and currency. It is contended by some, that if you were to dispense with coin altogether, to adopt the principle of Mr. Ricardo's plan, and make bank notes not convertible into gold at the will of the holder, excepting when presented to the amount of a very considerable sum (£300 or £400 for instance), and then convertible into bullion and not coin, you would provide a security against the effects of a panic connected with political causes, causing a sudden demand for gold. I very much doubt the policy of taking such precautions against such a contingency, and consider that the most effectual measure for promoting permanent confidence in the paper circulation of the country, is to require that the gold coin shall be in general use for small payments, and the promissory note shall be of equal value with the coin which it professes to represent. I shall here close my observations on the measure of value and the coinage, and proceed to the more immediate subject for consideration, namely, the state of the paper circulation of the country, and the principles which ought to regulate it. I must state, at the outset, that in using the word money, I mean to designate by that word the coin of the realm, and promissory notes payable to bearer on demand. In using the words



paper currency, I mean only such promissory notes. I do not include in those terms bills of exchange, or drafts on bankers, or other forms of paper credit. I will not weary the House with a discussion as to the precise nature of deposits, and whether they constitute a part of the currency of the country. There is a material distinction, in my opinion, between the character of a promissory note payable to bearer on demand, and other forms of paper credit, and between the effects which they respectively produce upon the prices of commodities and upon the exchanges. The one answers all the purposes of money, passes from hand to hand without endorsement, without examination, if there be no suspicion of forgery: and it is in fact, what its designations imply it to be, currency or circulating medium. I do not deny that other forms of paper credit have some effects in common with Bank notes, that they all have a tendency to economise the use of metallic money, and have a common influence on the value of gold to the extent to which they dispense with the use of it, and thus leave a larger quantity available for the general purposes of the world than there would otherwise be. But I think experience shows that the paper currency, that is, the promissory notes payable to bearer on demand, stands in a certain relation to the gold coin and the foreign exchange in which other forms of paper credit do not stand. There are striking examples of this adduced in the report of the bullion committee of 1810, in the case both of the Bank of England, and of the Irish and Scotch Banks. In the case of the Bank of England, shortly after its establishment, there was a material depreciation of paper in consequence of its excessive issue. The notes of the Bank of England were at a discount of 17 per cent. There was no doubt as to the solvency of the Bank, for bank stock, on which 60 per cent. had been paid, was selling at 110 per cent. After trying various expedients, it was at length determined to reduce the amount of bank notes outstanding. The consequence was an immediate increase in the value of those which remained in circulation, the restoration of them to par, and a corresponding improvement in the foreign exchanges. In the case of Ireland, in the year 1804, the exchange with England was very unfavourable. A committee was appointed to consider the causes. It was denied by most of the witnesses from Ireland that they were at all connected with excessive issues of Irish notes. It was then stoutly maintained—and it was afterwards in 1810—that “notes issued only in proportion to the demand in exchange for good and convertible securities, payable at specific periods, could not tend to any excess in circulation, or to any depreciation.” In the spring of 1804, the exchange of Ireland with England was so unfavourable that it required £118 10s. of the notes of the Bank of Ireland to purchase £100 of the notes of the Bank of England. Between the year 1804 and the year 1806 the notes of the Bank of Ireland were reduced from £3,000,000 to £2,410,000, and the effect of this, taken in conjunction with an increase of the English circulation, was to restore the relative value of Irish paper and the exchange with England to par. In the same manner, an unfavourable state of the exchange between Scotland and England has been more than once corrected by a contraction of the paper circulation of Scotland. In all these cases the action has been upon that part of the paper credit of the country which has consisted of promissory notes payable to the bearer on demand. There has been no interference with other forms of paper credit, nor was it contended then, as it is now contended by some, that promissory notes are identical in their nature with bills of exchange, and with checks on bankers, and with deposits, and that they cannot be dealt with on any separate principle. There is a passage in the work to which I have before referred, the treatise of Lord Liverpool, which draws the just distinction between paper credit and paper currency, and exposes the fallacy of those who deprecate any attempt to regulate by law the paper currency, on the ground that it is not distinguishable in its nature from paper credit. Lord Liverpool observes—“It has been a common artifice, practised by those who have written on paper currency, to confound paper credit with paper currency; and even the higher sorts of paper currency with the inferior sorts, such as immediately interfere with the use of the coins of the realm. Paper credit is not only highly convenient and beneficial, but is even absolutely necessary in carrying on the trade of a great commercial kingdom. Paper currency is a very undefined term, as used by speculative writers. To find arguments in its support, at least to the extent to which it is at present carried, they have been obliged to connect it with paper

credit; so that the principles on which the use of paper credit is truly founded, may be brought in support of a great emission of paper currency. Paper currency, strictly speaking, consists only of bills or notes payable or convertible into cash on demand by the person who issued the same at the will of the holder."

That appears to me to be the true definition of paper currency, as distinguished from paper credit. It is the substitute for, and the immediate representative of coin, and with coin it constitutes "money." And if you will adhere to the standard of value, and will adopt such measures as shall ensure the uniform equivalency of bank notes to coin, you may safely, in my opinion, leave untouched other forms of paper credit, and entrust the regulation and control of them to individual caution and discretion. There are some, however, who admit the validity of this distinction, and yet contend that no new legislative interference is required in the case of promissory notes. In their opinion the true principles which should govern the issue of such notes are, freedom of competition, and immediate convertibility into coin at the will of the holder. The combination of these principles will, in their opinion, afford to the public a complete security against abuse of the privilege of issue. In support of that opinion they have, undoubtedly, the high authority of Adam Smith and of Ricardo. Both these eminent writers assume that immediate convertibility into coin is all that is requisite to prevent the excessive issue of paper. It is no impeachment of their sagacity, if, in the progress which this science, like all other sciences, is making, there be reason to doubt the soundness of any particular opinion which they may have delivered. And it is our duty to disregard their authority, and to act on the conclusions of our own judgment, if either reason or experience convinces us that they are safer guides. It appears to me that we have, from reasoning, from experience, from the admissions made by the issuers of paper money, abundant ground for the conclusion, that, under a system of unlimited competition, although it be controlled by convertibility into coin, there is not an adequate security against the excessive issue of promissory notes. We should infer, certainly, from reasoning, that free competition in the supply of any given article will probably ensure us the most abundant supply of that article at the cheapest rate. But we do not want an abundant supply of cheap promissory paper. We want only a certain quantity of paper, not, indeed, fixed and definite in nominal amount, but just such a quantity of paper, and that only, as shall be equivalent in point of value to the coin which it represents. If the paper be cheaper than the coin, it is an evil and not an advantage. That system, therefore, which provides a constant supply of paper equal in value to coin, and so varying in amount as to ensure at all times immediate convertibility into coin, together with perfect confidence in the solvency of the issuers of paper, is the system which ought to be preferred. Now, unless the issuers of paper conform to certain principles, unless they vigilantly observe the causes which influence the influx or efflux of coin, and regulate their issues of paper accordingly, there is danger that the value of the paper will not correspond with the value of coin. The difference may not be immediately perceived,—nay, the first effect of undue issue, by increasing prices, may be to encourage further issues; and as each issuer, where there is unlimited competition, feels the inutility of individual efforts of contraction, the evil proceeds, until the disparity between gold and paper becomes manifest, confidence in the paper is shaken, and it becomes necessary to restore its value by sudden and violent reductions in its amount, spreading ruin among the issuers of paper, and deranging the whole monetary transactions of the country. If we admit the principle of a metallic standard, and admit that the paper currency ought to be regulated by immediate reference to the foreign exchanges,—that there ought to be early contractions of paper on the efflux of gold,—we might, I think, infer from reasoning, without the aid of experience, that an unlimited competition in respect to issue will not afford a security for the proper regulation of the paper currency. Let us now refer to the admissions made by those who are the advocates for unlimited competition. Several country bankers were examined by the select committee, and their evidence is important: it demonstrates the absence of that controlling check upon issue which ought to be applied, if the principles for which I contend are just. Mr. Hobhouse, a banker, in the south-west of England, (a brother of the right hon. baronet the member for Nottingham,) who spoke with some authority

from his having been chairman of the committee of private bankers, and their selected organ, was examined before the committee. What account did he give of the issue of private bankers? He was asked—"With a rise of prices, would there be an increased paper issue by country bankers?" He answered,—"Yes, there will be an increase in the local circulation when prices rise. Gold is a commodity, of which there may be a glut as well as a scarcity; and I could never see any reason to be frightened at an export or drain of gold."

He was then asked,—"Ought not there to be a contraction of the circulation under such circumstances?" He answers—"Whether there ought or ought not, I cannot tell; but I am sure, that, in fact, there could not be. I am perfectly satisfied that it is quite impossible for these local currencies to be influenced by the price of gold or the foreign exchanges."

He is then asked—"Does it not often happen that your circulation is increased in the beginning of a drain of gold?" He answers,—"Yes; we do not pretend that our circulation is at all governed by it. It is governed by what I have stated already."

Another witness examined was Mr. Stuckey. He was asked this question,—"Supposing it should be ultimately thought that it is desirable that the country circulation should have a general conformity to the state of the foreign exchanges; do you conceive that this could, in any way, be effected by the country bankers?" He answers—"I do not at present see how it could be accomplished; and I may take the liberty of going further in answer to that question, and saying that it appears to me that the country issues, as conducted in the West of England, have very little or nothing to do with foreign exchanges."

Now, the effect of this evidence is, to prove that country banks do not and cannot control their issues according to the state of the foreign exchanges. The amount of their issues is governed by prices, rather than by a reference to the exchange. When speculation is active, and prices rise, that is to say, at the very time at which a check may most probably be required on the increased issues of the country banks, their activity is stimulated. Just at the period when that warning is given, so far from the warning being attended to, there is increased action in the opposite direction. Prices are rising. The country bankers have no control over their currency. The increase of price compels increase of issue, and thus there is going on at the same time the reciprocal action of increased speculation, and an additional stimulus given to that speculation by increased issues. The first witness from whose evidence I quoted, when asked whether the circulation of country banks was governed, as that of the Bank of England was, by the state of the exchanges, fairly admitted that it was not. He was asked,—"Do you mean that when a drain of gold was beginning, that was the time when frequently the circulation of the country banks was increased?" The answer of Mr. Hobhouse, is—"Yes; there is an increase at the beginning of a drain of gold, and the circulation is not governed by it."

The fact is, there is no sense of individual responsibility; each issuer says, and says naturally enough, "It is in vain for me, individually, to contract my issues, when others will not do the same. I shall suffer by doing so. My efforts will produce no effect on the aggregate, while some competitor will take that share of the circulation which I may withdraw." And thus, each refusing to make the individual sacrifice, (which, indeed, is useless where only made individually,) the crisis comes,—there is a demand for gold which cannot be satisfied, and the end of all is, much individual suffering and many fortunes ruined, from the necessity of a sudden and violent effort to establish, by the contraction of issue, an equilibrium between gold and paper. Thus it appears to me that the conclusions of reason against unlimited competition of issue, are amply confirmed by the admission of the advocates for it. Are the lessons of experience at variance with the conclusions we are entitled to draw from reason and from evidence? What has been the result of unlimited competition in the United States? In the United States the paper circulation was supplied, not by private bankers, but by joint-stock banks established on principles apparently the most satisfactory. There was every precaution taken against insolvency; unlimited responsibility of partners—excellent regulations for the publication and audit of accounts—immediate convertibility of paper into gold. If the principle of unlimited competition, controlled by such checks, be safe, why

has it utterly failed in the United States? How can it be shown that the experiment was not fairly made in that country? Observe this fact. While there existed a central bank (the United States' Bank), standing in some such relation to the other banks of the United States as the Bank of England stands to the banks of the country, there was some degree (imperfect it is true) of control over the general issues of paper. But when the privileges of the central bank ceased, when the principle of free competition was left unchecked, then came, notwithstanding professed convertibility, immoderate issues of paper, extravagant speculation, and the natural consequences, suspension of cash payments and complete insolvency. Hence I conclude that reason, evidence, and experience combine to demonstrate the impolicy and danger of unlimited competition in the issue of paper. I have now stated—with respect to the measure of value, with respect to the coinage and currency—and with respect to promissory notes payable on demand—the broad and general principles which I think ought to regulate these three great elements of our monetary system. I have done on this occasion what I have done on others. I have stated, without the slightest compromise or concealment, the leading principles to which, in my opinion, our legislation in those matters ought to conform. I have now to state the extent to which I propose to carry out those principles. If I do not carry them out immediately to their full and entire extent, I may be told, as I have been told before, that very good principles have been laid down in the abstract, but that practically I shrink from their application. Nevertheless, the opinion which I have formerly expressed I still entertain—that it is of great importance that public men should acknowledge the great principles by which important measures should be regulated: and, in discussing a question of such magnitude as the present, I had rather it were said, "You fall short in the application of sound and admitted principles," than that "You have concealed or perverted those principles for the purpose of justifying your limited application of them." In addressing the House on this important subject, I have, in the first instance, stated principles which I deem to be correct, and which ought to be the rule and guide of our future legislation. I have now to consider, with the same unreservedness, how far the consideration due to special circumstances, to existing interests, to the usages and habits of the community, demands caution and limitation in the immediate application of those principles. All I can promise is, that I will propose no practical measure which is inconsistent with the principles which I have laid down, and which does not tend to their ultimate establishment. It is, however, most important that those who are responsible for the management of the affairs of a great country like this—seeing how easy it is, by unwise legislation, to create panic or introduce confusion into the monetary transactions of the country—it is most important that they should deal considerably with private interests: first, because justice requires it; and, secondly, because there is danger that the cause of progressive amendment and reform will be injured, if you cannot reconcile reform with a due regard to the welfare and happiness of individuals. In what mode then, admitting the principles I have announced to be correct, in what mode shall we best provide for the present application and ultimate establishment of them, with the least disturbance of existing interest? Some have contended, and I am not prepared to deny the position, that if we had a new state of society to deal with, the wisest plan would be, to claim for the state the exclusive privilege of the issue of promissory notes, as we have claimed for it the exclusive privilege of coinage. They consider that the state is entitled to the whole profits to be derived from that which is the representative of coin, and that if the state had the exclusive power of issuing paper, there would be established a controlling power which would ensure, as far as possible, an equilibrium in the currency. At the same time there have been men, whose judgment is also entitled to weight, who have expressed a different opinion on this subject. This question was under the consideration of the House when Lord Althorp brought forward the Bank Charter Bill, in 1833. It had also been the subject of consideration in the select committee of 1832; and Lord Althorp, in moving the extension of the Bank Charter, discussed the policy of a single bank of issue to be constituted by, and responsible to the government. Having mentioned the name of Lord Althorp, I must, though I differ from that noble lord in respect to politics, bear testimony to his integrity, and to the soundness of his judgment in all financial matters. No

man who ever filled the office which the noble lord then held is entitled to stand higher in public estimation as respects those qualifications for a public trust. On the occasion to which I have just referred, Lord Althorp said:—"Another point for consideration is, whether the profits, which must necessarily be derived from the circulating medium of the country, should be possessed by government, or should be allowed to remain in private hands? Now, Sir, the advantages, the only advantages, which I have been enabled to discover in a government bank, as compared with a private company, are those which result from having responsible persons to manage the concern, the public deriving the benefit of it; but then, on the other hand, I think these advantages are much more counterbalanced by the political evils which would inevitably result from placing this bank under the control of the government. I think that the effect of the State having the complete control of the circulating medium in its own hands would be most mischievous. Under these circumstances, Sir, I certainly am prepared to propose the continuation of a single bank of issue in the metropolis, subject to the control of the publicity of their accounts. If we were now, for the first time, establishing a system of banking on which the country should proceed, I think this would be the most advisable mode of establishing a bank in the metropolis. But, Sir, this proposition has the additional advantage—and it is no mean one—that it will occasion the least change; because I certainly am of opinion that, unless some great advantages could be derived from a change in the monetary system of this country, nothing could be more ill-advised—nothing could be more useless, than to depart from it."

In the latter part of Lord Althorp's observations I entirely agree. The true policy in this country is to work, so far as it be possible, with the instruments you have ready for your hand—to avail yourselves of that advantage which they possess from having been in use, from being familiar from constituting a part of the habits and usages of society. They will probably work more smoothly than perfectly novel instruments of greater theoretical perfection. If we disturb that which is established, let us have some good practical reason for the change. It is now incumbent on me to detail and explain the practical measures which I propose for the regulation of the currency. I will state them consecutively, and without intermediate comment, in order that the House may be in full possession of the plan recommended by the government. We think it of great importance to increase the controlling power of a single Bank of Issue. We think it the wisest course to select the Bank of England as that controlling and central body, rather than to appoint commissioners acting under the authority of parliament for the purpose of the issue of a paper currency. I therefore propose, with respect to the Bank of England, that it should continue in possession of its present privileges of issue, but that there should be a complete separation of the business of banking from that of issue; that there should be a department of issue separate from the department of banking, with separate officers and separate accounts. I propose that to the issue department should be transferred the whole amount of bullion now in the possession of the bank, and that the issue of bank-notes should hereafter take place on two foundations, and two foundations only:—first, on a definite amount of public securities; secondly, exclusively upon bullion. The action of the public will regulate the amount of that portion of the note circulation which is issued upon bullion. With respect to the banking business of the bank, I propose that it should be governed on precisely the same principles as would regulate any other body dealing with Bank of England notes. The fixed amount of securities on which I propose that the Bank of England should issue notes, is £14,000,000, the whole of the remainder of the circulation to be issued exclusively on the foundation of bullion. I propose that there should be a complete periodical publication of the accounts of the Bank of England, both of the banking and issue department. Objections were urged in 1833, to frequent publications of these accounts; but, in my opinion, those objections are without foundation. I have the strongest impression that nothing will more conduce to the credit of the bank itself, and to the prevention of needless alarm, than the complete and immediate disclosure of its transactions. I would, therefore, propose to enact by law that there should be returned to the government a weekly account of the issue of notes by the Bank of England, of the amount of bullion, of the amount of deposits, of securities, in short, a general summary of every transaction both in the issue department and the banking department of the Bank of England; and that

the government should forthwith publish unreservedly, and weekly, the account which they receive from the bank. It is desirable, in order to make the whole plan more clearly understood, that I should now state the regulations we propose to establish with respect to other banking establishments, and afterwards, that I should revert to the subject of the Bank of England, and state the terms which we have made with the bank, subject to the ratification of parliament. Our general rule is, to draw a distinction between the privilege of issue and the conduct of the ordinary banking business. We think they stand on an entirely different footing. We think that the privilege of issue is one which may be fairly and justly controlled by the State, and that the banking business, as distinguished from issue, is a matter in respect to which there cannot be too unlimited and unrestricted a competition. The principle of competition, though unsafe in our opinion when applied to issue, ought we think, to govern the business of banking. After the issue of paper currency has once taken place, it is then important that the public should be enabled to obtain the use of that issue on as favourable terms as possible. With regard to banks in England and Wales, other than the Bank of England, we propose, that from this time, no new bank of issue should be constituted. I have stated that our object is to effect the change we contemplate, with as little detriment as possible to individual interests. We, therefore, do not propose to deprive existing banking establishments, which are now actually banks of issue, of the privilege they possess. We do not wish to raise that alarm which we fear would be excited if there should be any sudden extinction of the power of issue now possessed by these banking establishments. Leaving, therefore, to the existing banks, which are actually banks of issue, their privilege of issue, we subject them to the condition that they shall not exceed the existing amount of their issue; this amount to be determined by the average issue of each bank for a definite preceding period, of two or three years, for instance. The Bank of England will thus be acquainted with the extent of the issue from all other establishments. I know I am liable to be told that the issues of these banks may be much larger under particular circumstances and at particular periods, than at others; but I have obtained returns, of a confidential nature, from ten of the best-conducted banks in the country, six of them being in agricultural, and four in manufacturing districts; and the amount of their variation of issue is much less than might be imagined. If, however, there should at any time be a demand for an increased issue, there would always be ready means of supplying it; as the banks may, by investing a portion of their capital in public securities, command a given amount of Bank of England notes by the sale of such securities, and, with those notes, may supply any occasional demand for increased local issues. While we thus restrain the issue of promissory notes, we intend to facilitate the banking business. Many of the joint-stock banking companies have not at present the privilege of suing and being sued. There are two descriptions of joint-stock banks; those constituted under the Act of 1826, and those established under the Act of 1833. The time has come when you must determine whether you will permit and encourage the system of joint-stock banks, or extinguish it. If you determine to retain the system, then you ought to give the banks every facility for the transaction of their business. The joint-stock banks ask for the privilege of suing and being sued; but this privilege, if granted, is a privilege not only to them, but to the public, who will have readier means of procuring redress in case of wrong. Proceeding on the principles of facilitating banking operations, we propose to amend the existing law in other particulars. The place whence legal notice may be issued by joint-stock banks, or where it may be served, is at present imperfectly defined. Again, the joint-stock banks are bound by the acts of an unauthorized partner, it being the principle of partnerships that the acts of one bind the rest of the partners. But in the case of joint-stock banks with a very large proprietary, there are no means of controlling the admission of individual partners. The purchase of shares constitutes a partner. We propose, therefore, to exempt the company from liability on account of the unauthorized acts of a simple partner; still making the company responsible for the unauthorized acts of a director of the bank. The appointment to be a director implies choice, and the confidence of the elective body; and this distinction between liabilities for the acts of a director, and that for a simple partner is therefore a just one. The chief com-

plaint of the joint-stock banks in London is, that they cannot accept bills for a less date than six months. Other private banking establishments in London have an unlimited power of acceptance, but joint-stock banks labour under the prohibition I have mentioned. This was insisted on by the Bank of England, when the last charter was discussed, in order that the joint-stock banks should not come into competition with that establishment and the London private banks, by being allowed the power of acceptance for a less date than six months. We propose to place the joint-stock banks in London on a perfect equality in this respect, and to give them the power of accepting bills of any amount and for any period. It is thought by some that this privilege might be so perverted as to give rise to a paper currency differing in form, but not in principle, from promissory notes. The power has been held by private banks from time immemorial, and it has not hitherto been accompanied by any abuse; and why should it be anticipated that joint-stock banks would abuse a similar power, contrary to the intentions of the legislature? But I give public notice, that, if the power should be abused,—if it should be attempted to circulate small bills so accepted, within the limits reserved to the bank,—I shall not hesitate to appeal to parliament on the instant, for the purpose of correcting that evil. These, then, are the facilities we propose to extend to the joint-stock banks. I will now mention the conditions or restrictions we propose to apply to all existing banks. In the first place, we require of all such banks, that there be a full and complete periodical publication of the names of all partners and directors. This is what the London and Westminster voluntarily publishes. It is said, that the public have a great security against loss, in the fact, that each partner is liable to the extent of his whole fortune for the debts of the bank to which he belongs. Very well. Let the public then know who the partners are. Let us know the transfers of shares that take place; let us determine how long the responsibility for the possession of shares will attach to a party; as we have the comfort of unlimited responsibility, give us the names of those who are our guarantees. There is another condition we have a right to insist upon. We are to continue to existing banks the privilege of issue. Let us know the amount of the issues. We are going to demand from the Bank of England a weekly account of issues, and any bank exercising the privilege of issue ought to make a similar publication. If a bank objects to the condition of publication, it can absolve itself from it by issuing only Bank of England paper. It is said, that the weekly publication of issues will disclose secrets of which a rival may take advantage; that it will show “the weak point.” Now I wish “the weak point” (if there be one) to be shown, and that the public may have the advantage of knowing it. It is said, erroneous inferences will be drawn from weekly publication; that the issues at one time will appear large, and at another comparatively small. But the frequency of publication will enlighten the public mind on these points, and will dispel the erroneous impressions to which ignorance or the attempt at concealment gives rise. Having required the publication of their issues from all banks to which the privilege of issue is continued, I do not propose to carry further the demand for publicity. I do not wish to pry into the affairs of each bank, and above all, I deprecate the taking of delusive securities against mismanagement and abuse. The public will hereafter know the names of the persons by whom banking business is to be conducted, and the public must rely on their own caution and discretion as a security against being injured or defrauded. It has been frequently proposed to require from each bank a periodical publication of its liabilities, its assets, and the state of its transactions generally. But I have seen no form of account which would be at all satisfactory—no form of account which might not be rendered by a bank on the very verge of insolvency, if there were the intention to conceal a desperate state of affairs. The return for instance of “overdrawn accounts” might lead to very erroneous inferences as to the condition of a bank making such a return. A large amount of overdrawn accounts might in one case be indicative of gross mismanagement. It might in another case be perfectly compatible with the security of a bank, acting on the Scotch principle, and making advances at interest to customers in whom the bank had entire confidence. It has been proposed by some that the shares of joint-stock banks should be prohibited below a certain minimum; that there should be no shares of amounts less than £100 or £50, or some fixed amount. But as, under the encouragement of the legislature, banks have been established

with £20 and £10 shares, and now exist, and, I believe, in many cases, have conducted their business satisfactorily, it would be harsh to insist on a sudden alteration in the amount of shares in the case of existing banks. Then, again, as to calling on all existing banks to invest a portion of their capital in government securities, I have considered this maturely; but I see great difficulty in the way of forcing upon existing banks any compulsory arrangement of this nature, little prospect of any additional security from loss. As to future companies we have a right to make what regulations we please, and to adopt as to them what we may deem a better principle for their establishment. We propose, then, that no new joint-stock bank of deposit (of course it cannot be one of issue) shall be constituted except upon application to a department of the government for this purpose; that there shall be a registration of the prospectus, a certain amount of paid-up capital, and a limitation as to the nominal amount of each share. We propose also to require that the deed of settlement should be drawn up according to a prescribed form. The deeds at present are drawn up according to no fixed form, and there is great difficulty in ascertaining, by a reference to the deeds of settlement, from their complexity and want of uniformity, what are the powers and liabilities of banks, and what are the regulations under which they act. We expect that new banks will be constituted, conforming to the principles we thus establish; issuing, if they are banks of issue, the paper of the Bank of England, and by their conformity to those principles, establishing claims upon the public confidence. They may, no doubt, interfere with the business and profits of existing banks; but we exclude no existing bank from the power of adapting the new regulations to its own concerns, and we consider that species of interference which arises, not from vexatious intermeddling with the affairs of an existing bank, but from a purification and improvement of the system of banking, to be perfectly legitimate. Having thus stated the proposed regulations as to the other banks, I now revert to the position of the Bank of England, and the relation in which it is to stand to the government. I interrupted my statement as to the bank, because I can make our proposed relations to the bank more intelligible by having first described the regulations applicable to other banking establishments. I have stated that the issue of the banks are to be upon bullion and upon a fixed amount of securities. We propose that £14,000,000 should be that amount of securities. Seeing no advantage in a change, we propose to continue upon the present terms the existing loan of £11,000,000, made by the bank to the government, at 3 per cent. This debt of the government to the bank is to be assigned as part of the security upon which the issues of the bank are to take place. There will then remain £3,000,000 of additional securities, Exchequer Bills or other securities, over which the bank are to have entire control. We propose that the Bank should have a right, in case of necessity, to limit its issues upon that portion of the securities, viz. £3,000,000. Circumstances might possibly arise in which the bank might find it necessary to restrict its issues within the amount of £14,000,000. In that case the bank will have full power to diminish the £3,000,000 of securities which are to be deposited in addition to the £11,000,000 of debt assigned. I can hardly conceive a case in which it would be advisable to limit the issues to less than £11,000,000. I have said that the bank shall be restricted from issuing notes upon securities to any greater extent than £14,000,000. This restriction applies, however, to ordinary circumstances, and the present state of the affairs of the bank. The case may occur in which it would be reasonable, and indeed might be necessary, that there should be an increase of the issues of the bank upon securities. Suppose the country circulation to amount to £3,000,000, and of this amount £2,000,000 to be withdrawn, either in consequence of the failure of the banks, or in consequence of agreements with the Bank of England to issue Bank of England paper—in that case, in order to supply the void, it may be necessary that the bank should make an increased issue. A part of this issue may fairly be made upon securities. Our proposal is, that the profit to be derived from such an issue shall be placed to the account of the government; and that no increased issue upon securities shall take place without a communication from the bank to the government, and without the express sanction of three members of the government: the First Lord of the Treasury, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the President of the Board of Trade. We do not contemplate, and do not intend to provide for, an increased issue upon securities in any other case than that to which I have referred, namely, the supply of a void



caused by the withdrawal of some considerable portion of the existing country circulation. Let me here advert to an enactment which passed when the Bank Charter was last continued, which passes by the name of the Legal Tender Clause. It enabled other banks than the Bank of England to pay their notes in notes of the Bank of England, and thus relieved them from the obligation of paying in coin. I opposed this clause at the time, considering it to be at variance with the principle of immediate convertibility. I do not now propose to repeal it, seeing that it has been in operation for several years, and that it may facilitate the substitution of Bank of England notes for the notes of other banks. It may serve to increase the controlling influence of the bank, and to habituate the public to the use of its notes. The consequences either of the continuance or of the repeal of the clause are probably less than is generally supposed. I will now detail the pecuniary engagements made with the bank upon the part of government. The bank is to retain the privilege of issuing notes on securities to the amount of £14,000,000. On an interest of three per cent., the gross gains of the bank upon this total of issue would be £420,000. In estimating the net profits, we must consider the deductions to be made. First, what is the cost of the issue? The bank, for the sake of the public, conducts its issue on a liberal principle. It does not reissue notes; it provides the means of keeping every note issued within ten years; it gives therefore great facilities to the public in the detection of fraud, or the tracing of transactions within that period. The total cost to the bank, on an issue of £20,000,000, has been estimated (by the committee of 1833) at £117,000, but I am inclined to estimate it at about £113,000, which taken from £420,000, leaves £307,000. There is then to be deducted about £60,000 composition with the Stamp Office, for the privilege of issuing notes. There is also about £24,000 paid by the bank to those bankers who undertake to issue Bank of England notes, receiving a commission of one per cent. The result is, after subtracting these items, that there would be a net profit of £220,000 derived from the issuing of notes. What is the sum we are to claim from the bank for continued privileges? The bank think we ought to make a material deduction from the sum fixed when the charter was last renewed, and paid at present, namely, £120,000. But though in some respects we affect the peculiar privileges of the bank, we give to the bank increased control over the paper currency, and increased stability to their banking business. We have, therefore, insisted on an equal payment in future. We have, of course, had negotiations on the subject; and I must, in justice to the gentlemen who have conducted it on the part of the bank (the Governor and deputy Governor,) declare that I never saw men influenced by more disinterested or more public-spirited motives than they have evinced throughout our communications with them. They have reconciled their duties as managers of a great institution, bound to consult the interests of the proprietors, with enlightened and comprehensive views of the public interests. I hope the House will feel that, in the resolutions which I intend to propose, there is nothing to which the bank and the country ought not to accede with readiness. Hitherto the Bank of England has been accustomed to pay to the government a sum of £120,000. I now propose that the bank should, in addition to that sum, pay once for all £60,000, being the amount of fixed annual composition for the issue of its notes, which will bring the entire amount to a sum of £180,000, to be paid annually by the bank. The net profit of the bank, to be derived from the issue of notes, will probably not exceed the sum of £100,000. The House will no doubt bear in mind, that the public pay to the bank an annual sum of £248,000 under the provisions of certain Acts of Parliament, on account of the management, by the bank, of the public debt. From this payment of £248,000 will hereafter be deducted £180,000, leaving the total payment of the public to the bank, on the balance of the two accounts, a sum of £68,000. As to the duration of the Charter, we propose that it should be renewed for a period of twenty-one years, with a power of revision by parliament at the expiration of ten years. We propose, however, a departure from the arrangement made when the Charter was last renewed, in the following respects. Under the existing Charter, the power to revise accrues at the expiration of ten years; but, if the opportunity be not then taken advantage of, the Charter will endure without alteration for a further period of eleven years. We propose that at any time, after the lapse of ten years, there shall be the power of revision; that parliament, for instance, may permit

twelve or fifteen years to pass, and may then, should they think fit, revise the Charter of the bank, and its relation to the government. Of Ireland and Scotland I have hitherto made no mention; I propose to reserve for separate legislation the state of the currency of each of those parts of the United Kingdom. The prohibition against the establishment of new banks of issue will extend to them. They, also, will be included in those enactments which will require the performance for the future, of certain conditions preliminary to the formation of new Joint-stock Banks. But I have thought it more prudent to deal, in the first instance, with the issue of promissory notes in England and Wales; to establish certain principles for the regulation of that portion of the circulation; and to leave Ireland and Scotland for future legislation, in respect to their paper currency. That currency stands on a different footing in each country, from that in which it stands in this part of the United Kingdom; and the single measure I have to propose is so extensive, and affects such numerous and powerful interests, that I have been unwilling to encumber it with enactments requiring separate consideration, or to cloud the prospects of success, by having to encounter too powerful a combination of opponents. It will be remembered that to banks in Ireland and Scotland, the law permits the issue of notes of a less value than five pounds, and that in Scotland there is no single bank partaking of the character of the Bank of England. In Ireland there is the Bank of Ireland, with privileges somewhat similar to the Bank of England; but, on the whole, the circumstances of the two countries are so far different, that I should be unwilling to propose any measure affecting the circulation either of Scotland or Ireland, without the opportunity of much more mature consideration than it has been in the power of the government to give to this branch of the subject. Permit me, before I conclude, briefly to recapitulate the outlines of the plan recommended by her Majesty's servants. It is proposed that the Bank of England shall continue in possession of its present privileges—that it shall retain the exclusive right of issue, within a district of which sixty-five miles from London as a centre is the radius. The private banks within that district, which now actually issue notes, will, of course, be permitted to continue their issues to the amount of the average of the last two years. Two departments of the bank will be constituted: one for the issue of notes, the other for the transaction of the ordinary business of banking. The bullion now in the possession of the bank will be transferred to the Issue Department. The issue of notes will be restricted to an issue of £14,000,000 upon securities—the remainder being issued upon bullion—and governed in amount by the fluctuations in the stock of bullion. If there be, under certain defined circumstances, an increase of the issues of securities, it can only take place with the knowledge and consent of the government; and the profit derivable from such issue will belong to the public. Bankers now actually enjoying the privilege of issue, will be allowed to continue their issues, provided the maximum in the case of each bank does not exceed the average of a certain prescribed period. A weekly publication of issues will be required from every bank of issue. The names of shareholders and partners in all banks will be registered and published. No new bank of issue can be hereafter formed, and no Joint-stock company for banking purposes can be established, except after application to the government, and compliance with various regulations which will be hereafter submitted to the consideration of parliament. I have now concluded the duty which I have to perform, and trust I have clearly explained to the House the principles and details of the plan which the government proposes for the future regulation of the currency, and the grounds upon which it is founded. I ask for no vote to-night on the resolutions which I shall propose *pro formâ*, and, if I might give advice on such a subject, would recommend the postponement of discussion to a future day. To-morrow the correspondence which has taken place with the bank, explaining more in detail our communications with the bank, and the nature of the pecuniary arrangements between the bank and the government, will be laid upon the table. The knowledge of that correspondence is important as a preliminary to full and satisfactory discussion on the merits of our proposal. Considering the part which I took in the year 1819 in terminating the system of inconvertible paper currency, and in re-establishing the ancient standard of value, it will no doubt be a source of great personal satisfaction to me, if I shall now succeed, after the lapse of a quarter of a century since those measures were adopted, in obtaining the assent of

the House to proposals which are, in fact, the complement of them, and which are calculated to guarantee their permanence, and to facilitate their practical operation. But my gratification will be of a higher and purer nature than any connected with the satisfaction of personal feelings, if I may look forward to the mitigation or termination of evils, such as those which have at various times afflicted the country in consequence of rapid fluctuation in the amount and value of the medium of exchange. When I call to mind the danger to which the Bank of England has been exposed, the various effects of a sudden change from an overabundant to a contracted circulation, the reckless speculation of some of the Joint-stock Banks, the losses entailed on their shareholders, the insolvency of so many private banks, the miserable amount of the dividends which have in many cases been paid, the ruin inflicted on innocent creditors, the shock to public and private credit, then indeed I rejoice, on public grounds, in the hope, that the wisdom of parliament will at length devise measures which shall inspire just confidence in the medium of exchange, shall put a check on improvident speculations, and shall ensure, so far as legislation can ensure, the just reward of industry, and the legitimate profit of commercial enterprise conducted with integrity, and controlled by provident calculation. The right hon. baronet concluded by moving—"That it is expedient to continue to the Bank of England, for a time to be limited, certain of the privileges now by law vested in that corporation, subject to such conditions as may be provided by any Act to be passed for that purpose."

Resolution agreed to *pro formâ*, and the House resumed. Committee to sit again.

## HOURS OF LABOUR IN FACTORIES.

MAY 13, 1844.

This bill having been read a third time, Lord Ashley rose, and moved the addition of the clause of which he had given notice, limiting the hours of labour of young persons in factories to eleven hours per day, up to October 1847, and to ten hours per day after that period.

The clause was brought up and read the first time. On the question, "That the said clause be read a second time," a very long discussion ensued, towards the close of which—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said—I am certainly very sorry to trouble the House at this hour of the morning; but I do think it is of great importance that we should come to some decision on the subject without much further protraction of the discussion; and I think, at the same time, that I should abandon the duty which I have to perform in this House, if I did not state, without reserve and without hesitation, the strong opinions which I entertain upon the bill now under consideration. The question for the House to decide is, shall we at this early period curtail factory labour to the extent of two hours a day?—that is the question. Of what avail is it to taunt us with a violation of principle? If necessary, the House may reject our proposition, but what vindication is it of you that you alter our alleged violation of principle from twelve hours to ten? You say that her Majesty's government have committed an error in proposing a twelve hours' clause, and you say that that error shall justify you in interfering with adult labour. Now, for the present I will put the question of principle altogether aside, and I will discuss the matter with you as a question of degree; but I tell you first that we, the government, have arrived at the utmost limit to which we can go in a case of this kind—we have reached the utmost extent to which we can agree to limit the labour of adults. At the same time, remember that our error, if we have committed one, will be no vindication of you for adopting an impolitic measure. Prove me wrong if you can, but do not taunt me with doing that which you have done yourselves; for you have violated principle just as much as we have. Again, I recur to the question which the House has to decide—is it politic, or is it not, to limit the hours of labour in factories to ten? As I before said, I will discuss this with you as a question of degree; and, in such a discussion, I should be glad to learn what is the advantage of referring to the Corn-laws? If you ask me what I think of the Corn-laws, I am

prepared to state my opinions; but why in the present discussion tell us that we are inconsistent because we maintain the Corn-laws? Granted that we maintain a restriction upon corn, how can that justify you for imposing other restrictions upon the manufactures of the country? Take either branch of the dilemma, and you must find yourselves equally embarrassed. Agree with us that the Corn-laws happen to be justified by the peculiar circumstances of the country, and then you cannot with any consistency be favourable to the imposition of any such restriction as this ten hours' clause. Say, on the other hand, that the Corn-laws ought to be removed, and how can you consistently set them free and impose restrictions upon any other branch of trade? How can you restrict labour if you set free commerce? How do you reconcile the one or the other with justice? You tell us that the extent of your interference is very trifling, that it only goes the length of two hours in the work of the day; but have you forgotten that in all these cases there is a vast machine at work; that in fixing the employment of adult males you limit the labour of the machine? The factories at present employ the power of about 100,000 horses. The quantity of goods exported amounts to £51,000,000. Now, in the present bill, it is proposed to deal with £35,000,000 of exports. We have a steam-engine power equal to 100,000 horses. This power gives employment to 450,000 persons, and I will state the grounds of this calculation. In the year 1839, the horse-power employed in machinery was estimated upon good authority at rather below 97,000, and the persons employed in connection with that machinery at 430,000, being four and a half persons for each horse-power. Since that time there has been a considerable increase in the amount of machinery employed, which probably would justify us in fixing the present amount at 100,000 horse-power, and this would give a proportionate increase in the number of persons employed, which fixes them at about 450,000. Of these persons the average weekly wages is 10s. Taking the children and men one with another, the average weekly wages cannot be less than 10s., which gives a gross weekly payment of £225,000 for factory labour, paid to 450,000 persons. But what says the hon. member for Lambeth upon this point? He said that we could not get at the number; and that even if we did it would hardly prove considerable, compared with the whole population. [Mr. Hawes: What I stated was simply in answer to the statements of the right hon. baronet, the Home Secretary, that the account must be considered in reference to the whole population.] But what I say is, that this limitation of the hours of labour in factories to ten, is no test of the degree in which the measure will interfere with the manufacturers and with the labourers generally of the country. In our factories an immense amount of power in machinery is employed, which must be governed and controlled by a directing mind, and therefore, by your interference, you do not merely contract the manual labour of a few men, you limit the operations of mind, and of that wonderful machinery which assists in the production of articles intended both for the home and foreign market. But even the number of persons employed in immediate connection with the machine that you throw out of labour is not the whole consideration. When you throw a certain number of factory labourers out of occupation, you take away employment from a much greater number than if you legislated to the same extent upon an equal number of persons engaged in spade husbandry. Prohibit the use of one spade, and only one individual loses his work, but how many are thrown into idleness by the stoppage of a single steam engine—a power 1,000 times as great as that of a single spade, or any other simple instrument? In looking at a question of this kind, we must look at all the incidents of the case; we must remember that in changing the hours of labour from twelve to ten, we are dealing with an amount of weekly wages of not less than £225,000, and the effect of this is to lay a tax upon labour of not less than 16½ per cent. It is an income-tax upon the poor man of 16½ per cent., when you deny him a command over his own labour, and say he shall work only ten hours, instead of twelve. That 16½ per cent. amounts to £36,000 of weekly wages to be deducted from the gross sum of £225,000. That, however, is not the whole amount of the loss, for 16½ per cent. does not cover the whole sum; fixed capital will suffer by your proposed change in a corresponding degree, and the manufacturer to compensate himself will still further reduce wages, and, looking at the amount thus deducted from the retail trade, I beg the House to contemplate for a moment the effect of such a measure as this upon a single mill in Manchester. The

case of this mill is a fair test of what may be the probable effect of this measure upon other establishments. The owners of this mill hold their water-power upon lease. They never contemplated such an interference as the present, they have no clause in their lease to protect them from the interference of parliament, and what are they now to do with all their arrangements and liabilities founded upon the basis of the existing law? In that mill they at present work twelve hours a-day. There are 475 persons employed in it, of whom 119 are adult males; the remaining number, 356, would have their hours of labour also curtailed; and why should all this take place?—for the purpose of improving the social condition of the people employed in that mill. Let the House only look at the state of health of the persons employed in that mill. Out of 475, only seven are absent on account of illness. That is to say, that only one in 68 is incapacitated on account of illness, being  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the 475. Of the whole thus employed, 259 reside in Manchester, and 216 of the number have been attracted to that establishment: they have been allured to it by a high rate of wages, and they have been toiling during a period of prosperity in trade, to make a provision which shall guard them against the evils of poverty in old age. You tell these poor people that they are not to make the most of their labour while they can, and then you tell me that the prohibition is for their physical comfort, their moral improvement, and their social happiness. I admit freely, that our first consideration ought to be the moral habits of our people. But let us now observe the effect of the restrictions of factory labour upon other descriptions of labour not immediately connected with factory labour. I was told the other night that I ought not to refer to the trades connected with the working of metals—that I have no right to say that the labour there is more oppressive, and the labourers more entitled to interference and protection, because it is said that with those trades parliament would interfere if it could; but let us observe the effect upon other branches of industry, indirectly connected with factory labour. I am now discussing the question upon the moral and social view—keeping the commercial view of the subject entirely apart, and out of consideration for the present. Now, what effect will a tax upon machinery to the amount of 16 per cent.—that very tax for which all along the hand-loom weavers have been contending—what effect will it have upon hand-labour? The hand-loom weavers have always been saying, “See how we are affected by machinery—it destroys our trade—it ruins ourselves and families—impose a tax upon it, that we may have a chance of a fair competition.” Now, that is the very thing that you are going to do. You are about to give a stimulus to the hand-loom weavers—but their condition has occupied your attention, you have appointed committees of the House to consider that condition, you have established commissions, and you have sent down sub-commissioners, to examine evidence upon the spot. The effect of your measure will no doubt be, to give to that trade a short-lived prosperity; but, by affording this premium, are you advancing the morality, or the social comforts, of the labouring people of the country? You have evidence upon the point. The hand-loom weavers exist, in different parts, in great numbers. They have been languishing hitherto, and nothing but a tax upon machinery could give them even a short-lived chance of success. Here is the report of the commissioners. Now, first, as to the number of hours. You complain of twelve hours’ labour in factories. What is the number you find stated here, as the common hours of the hand-loom weavers, which, mark, you cannot control, unless you admit the right of interference in every individual house, and upon every individual loom? With reference to this class of operatives, Mr. Muggerridge reports:—“I am of opinion that the ordinary hours of labour of the weaver, when work is attainable, may be estimated, on the average, at fourteen daily. I think the weavers wait for, or are out of work, about one-fourth of their time, on an average of years. In the township of Briercliffe with Entwistle, in this neighbourhood, Mr. James Smith of Haggate, stated—‘Our tenants are nearly all weavers. There has been no payment of rents for the last two half-yearly rent days, in our township, and a third is fast approaching.’ In a survey of this township, I found 171 families of weavers, numbering 968 persons, and possessing 606 looms, all then employed. Their gross earnings for the week were £85 : 16 : 6, or 10s. 0½d. per family, from which, it was alleged, £30 : 4 : 10 must be deducted for expenses, giving net 6s. 6d. per family, on an average of 3½ looms to each family.”

You don't attempt to interfere with this description of labour, because you feel it would be impossible, unless you establish a system of domestic inquisition throughout every house wherein the business is carried on. True it is, they are without work three or four months in the year. Mr. Hickson, a competent authority on this subject, states, that—"Weaving, as a domestic occupation, among the hand-loom cotton-weavers, is carried on in circumstances more prejudicial to health, and at a greater sacrifice of personal comfort, than weaving in any other branch. The great majority of hand-loom cotton-weavers work in cellars, sufficiently light to enable them to throw the shuttle, but cheerless, because seldom visited by the sun. The reason that cellars are chosen, is because cotton requires to be woven damp. The air, therefore, must be cool and moist, instead of warm and dry. Unhappily, the medium which might be preserved, without injury to the constitution, and which is preserved in the best power-loom factories, the impoverished hand-loom cotton-weavers are obliged often to disregard. I have seen them working in cellars dug out of an undrained swamp; the streets formed by their houses, without sewers, and flooded with rain: the water, therefore, running down the bare walls of the cellars, and rendering them unfit for the abode of dogs or rats. It is difficult to imagine a darker picture; and it may surprise the denouncers of our factory system, to find all the vices and miseries which they attribute to it flourishing so rankly, in the midst of a population, not only beyond the walls of a factory, but also beyond the contamination of a large town. Still more, that these vices and miseries decline, as the population emerges from the condition, which might have been fondly anticipated to be one of rural innocence and happiness, to be a town, and factory population. For the single-hand trade of the country, not only exhibits the greatest demoralisation at home, but helps to fill the criminal calendars of neighbouring counties."

So I say, that I doubt the policy of discouraging the factories, if the consequence be to give a premium to a trade more immoral, more oppressive, and less productive. Now, allow me shortly to refer to the arguments by which this measure is attempted to be sustained. I will simply state them, and will not introduce one superfluous word, in giving what I consider to be a sufficient answer to each. First, then, it is stated, that by limiting the number of hours to ten, as much work will be done as with twelve hours' labour—that there will be such an exercise of animal spirit and strength, on the part of the labourer, as more than to compensate for the difference in time. That is the statement, and I believe it to be an assumption entirely without foundation. As the hon. gentleman says, it might be true of manual labour, but, with regard to the work done by machinery, I cannot help thinking that it is quite impossible. I have had an opportunity of knowing the actual amount of work performed in a factory, in which the mill happened, for a time, to be in operation for only ten hours. The account was kept without any reference to the present question, and I think it affords a good indication of the general results of ten hours' labour. From March to July, 1842, a period of fifteen weeks, the mill was worked for twelve hours, for five days, and the usual time upon the Saturday. After that time, it was compelled to work five-sixths of the time—ten hours, instead of twelve, during five days. Now, the average weekly produce, when the time of working was twelve hours a day, was 119,000 hanks of cotton. According to the difference in the time of labour, the proportionate amount produced under the ten to that produced under the twelve hours would be 99,574 hanks. You argue, however, that a greater quantity will actually be produced, in consequence of the increased strength and spirits of the men; but, in this case, the fact was, that less was produced; that the actual amount produced, was only 99,172 hanks, being an amount, nearly corresponding to the proportion with time, but rather under than over the proportion. I have the greatest confidence in that statement, and to me it seems a convincing proof that your assumption of the produce of ten hours labour, being nearly equal to the produce of twelve hours' labour, is entirely without foundation. Another argument very much relied upon, put forward in a manner which shows that it is considered quite conclusive on the subject, is shortly this—it has been repeated in every night's debate, and seems very popular—it is said, that "which is morally wrong, cannot be politically right." This is a sort of saying, which is very much admired in certain quarters. [Lord Ashley: Hear.] But, all the arguments in the House ought to be submitted to the test of reason, and my noble friend must not be offended, if

I claim the privilege of submitting his argument to the same test. "That which is morally wrong, is not politically right." That is the principle, but what is the meaning of it? What is the meaning of that argument? I can understand it in reference to some enormous act of injustice or of aggression, as in the case of the revocation of the edict of Nantes, or the partition of Poland; but I wish to know, does it mean that I am bound to interfere by law with that which I feel to be morally wrong? If so, I distinctly say that such is not the true principle of legislation. I may be, as perhaps I shall be, denounced for holding this doctrine; but I shall be utterly regardless of such denouncement, and shall proceed fearless to examine the principle. I will show you there are many things which I know to be morally wrong, with which neither I nor you can interfere in the way of legislation; for instance, intemperance—envy, are great moral offences. Both, though convinced that they are wrong, I tolerate them, because I am also convinced they are not within the sphere of legislation. However grave the offence against morality, the Legislature attempts to strike a balance, and see whether the attempt to interfere would not be more prejudicial than connivance. But who is to decide the question of an act being immoral? or how am I to apply the rule of interference? In a despotic country the adoption of such a principle might lead to justify any atrocity. The inquisition itself could be defended upon this principle, for it only attempted to put down what it deemed morally wrong by the exercise of power. But in this case, where I admit that we ought to consult that which is for the lasting benefit of the people—for the advancement of morality and not for the increase of wealth—are we not left free to determine whether the means you propose will produce that end—whether those means are or are not morally right? In that sense I deny, Sir, that we are perpetrating a wrong in legislating for twelve hours' labour a day. Some go, however, further, and how am I to deal with those who advocate eight hours a day? The hon. member for Oldham (Mr. Fielden) says, "Restrict labour in factories to eight hours, there is no use in carrying it to ten; ten hours' labour of a female, perhaps pregnant, perhaps having a large family, will leave no sufficient time for the performance of domestic duties—your measure is incomplete, extend it to eight hours." Will those who contend for this simple rule, that what is morally wrong can't be politically right, vote for a motion of the hon. gentleman for restricting the period of female labour to eight hours a-day? He says that for them to work more is morally wrong; and if hon. gentlemen don't vote for it, are not they precisely in the same difficulty that I am, who object to the limitation of twelve hours? Certainly it would be much more agreeable to me to see women working ten hours than twelve; but balancing the evils of the interference with the good, seeing on the one hand a diminution of wages, on the other a risk of the loss of commerce, I fear that in a short time there would not be occupation for the productive industry of the country. I prefer twelve hours to ten upon that ground—not abstractedly, but upon a large and comprehensive view of the subject. Why, if you apply the same argument in opposition to the bill of him who asks you to limit the hours of labour to eight instead of ten, you admit that that great rule of legislation, that "that which is morally wrong cannot be politically right," constitutes no rule to act on; and that is the only way to test the proposal of my noble friend. I say that affords no safe rule for legislation. We meet you at once on the abstract question. Not that we like to see women labouring twelve hours, but because we doubt whether we should not be doing more that is morally wrong, by curtailing the labour and diminishing the wages and the comforts of the labourers, than by positively permitting them to work the twelve hours, which they may do now. The noble lord opposite (Lord Howick) vindicated his vote on commercial views, and I was rather surprised at the views which he took of the moral and social bearings of the question. I thought he would have said, that he was for the principle of non-interference, but that this was an exception to his principles of political economy; and I was surprised to hear him attempt to vindicate his vote by those novel views of political economy and foreign trade with which he favoured the House. If I understood the noble lord rightly, he is of opinion that it was a matter of no great importance whether or not we are able to undersell the Americans in the Chinese market. I always thought that the more cheaply you could produce an article of manufacture as compared

with another competing power, the more it was for your advantage, and that if you could command a greater quantity of the produce of another country—be it tea, cotton, or sugar—at a less sacrifice than they could be purchased by a third power, it would be a great advantage to you. But the noble lord has a doctrine that, because America wants tea, and levies no duty on it, it is therefore of no consequence on what terms we meet the Americans in the Chinese market. I do not understand the noble lord. I know that this is a great crisis in the commerce of that country. I know that America has been sending goods in large quantities to China, and that the Chinese have preference for English goods, and that a great rivalry and contest for supremacy exist, and I should, therefore, have thought that if, under such circumstances, England could have undersold America, it would, according to the doctrines of common sense and the received opinions of writers on political economy, have been a great advantage to us. The noble lord's views of foreign trade were rather peculiar. According to him, the extent of the foreign trade depends on the amount of the articles of importation for which you have a demand in your own country. But on what does this demand in your own country depend? Does it not depend on the profits of trade, on the accumulation of capital, and on the savings of industry? If I can save more money and make more profit by working for twelve hours instead of ten, shall I not be able to command a greater quantity of the commodities of other countries? If I produce an article more cheaply, accumulate more capital, and make more profit, is it not clear that I shall have a greater command of foreign articles? And therefore it is, that I cannot reconcile the doctrines of the noble lord as to foreign trade, with what appears to be the doctrines which have prevailed on foreign trade from the days of Adam Smith to the present moment. The noble lord says, "import as much as you can." I say, export as much as you can. The noble lord thinks that profits depend entirely on imports, and that imports ensure exports. But I say the profits depend on exports; that exports ensure imports, for you cannot export without importing something equivalent; therefore, I say that the novel doctrine of the noble lord has no foundation whatever; that foreign trade is a matter of barter, and that the policy of import and export stands on precisely the same foundation. I am, therefore, not at all disposed to agree to a ten hours' bill, by the novel theories which the noble lord advanced the other night, and which were so very peculiar and not well understood. I admit that I am afraid of foreign competition, and that the danger will be increased by the restriction on the hours of labour which you now propose. We have had a long peace—industry has been unfettered, and a disposition has been felt in all countries to seek for employment in manufacturing industry. There is a prospect of a continuance of that peace. There is a tendency to equalise the profits on all trades in this country. There is a similar tendency throughout the world. You thought it advisable to forego the advantage which your skill in machinery gave you exclusively. You had the command of iron and coal, and you did not abandon your advantage through generosity of feelings of disinterestedness, but because you could retain your exclusive possession of machinery no longer. You might keep the machines, perhaps, but you could not keep the men who made them. You had found that though you could prevent the export of whole machines, yet you could not prevent the exportation of the models, or of the machinery in parts. There was an attempt at the Custom House to prevent the export of the machinery, but all was in vain—machinery went out. That deprived you of the nominal advantage which you possessed as to machinery, and made you liable to be undersold by the rest of the world. There is a work written by a Belgian gentleman, Monsieur Dupetiaux, a member of a commission charged to propose a *projet de loi* to regulate the labour of young persons. I cannot, of course, be certain of the accuracy of all his details, but this is his account of the hours of labour in different countries. He professes to take them from a French work, published in 1837. Different regulations may have been published since, but the work states the number of hours of labour per week to be, in the United States 78; France 72 to 84; Prussia 72 to 90; Switzerland 78 to 84; Austria 72 to 80; Tyrol 78 to 80; Saxony 72; Baden 84; Bonn 94; and in England 69, being less in England than in any other competing country in Europe. We have permitted the exportation of machines—we have already less of weekly



labour than any other country, and yet now it is proposed that those 69 hours should be reduced to 58. I do think that is a most serious matter, and it requires statements of facts of a most unquestionable character, and arguments of the most cogent description to justify such an experiment. As it has been very truly said, we are now recovering from the depression of four disastrous years; during which we have had an opportunity of watching the effect of a forced limitation of the hours of labour. We have seen what it was to leave persons in the possession of time for which they had not a demand—we have seen the moral and social evils it produced; there is now a revival in trade; but with that revival in trade, you seek to dispirit competition by a legislative restriction of the hours of labour. New markets are opened, but in those new markets we meet competing rivals. We have to labour for several hours less in the week than any other country; and not satisfied with that, and as if we were not satisfied with the experience of the last four years, when manufacturing prosperity is returning, we don't permit six months to elapse before we try to reduce our amount of labour from sixty-nine hours per week to fifty-eight. I do earnestly and sincerely deprecate such interference. Are the facts which have been stated to be relied on? They made a great impression when stated; and when it was said that young females were compelled to walk (in addition to mental toil) from twenty to twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles a-day, it had great influence on the House and on the public; but if it be not so, don't let the original impression remain, and induce you to make this perilous experiment. Thirty-seven miles. Sir, I have from certain circumstances of my life some knowledge of factories, and I declare it as my conviction that such a distance, even as an extreme case, must be utterly impossible. Nay, taking it at twenty, I believe such never was the distance. I have the strongest impression upon my mind that no person ever walked that distance in a factory in one day. I have seen calculations made, in which I have much greater confidence than in others, and my firm impression is, that the *maximum* of possible distance is twelve miles in the course of the twelve hours—(I was surprised to see it stated even so high)—and I believe the average to be from eight to nine miles; but I am convinced it is capable of demonstration, that, taking all ordinary data, it is impossible that the distance should exceed a mile per hour. Whether or not a certain degree of walking may or may not be beneficial to the artisan is matter for inquiry. A moderate degree of labour I should think accompanying factory labour renders it more healthy, certainly, than that of the hand-loom weaver. Of course it must be limited; but, at all events, restricted to eight miles in the course of the day, I do not consider it can be prejudicial to health. But as to those impressions which have been founded on the statement made, that the number of miles trodden by the factory children per day is eighteen or twenty, I think it clear that those impressions are erroneous, and that those impressions which may have guided some gentlemen on former occasions ought not to influence them in giving their vote this night. To shew the straits to which some men are driven in vindication of their votes, I need only refer to the statement made by an hon. member last night, that gentleman being a member (of all places in the world) for Birmingham, whose prosperity depends upon the demand in the foreign markets for its production; and that hon. gentleman, feeling it difficult to deny that the consequence of this interference must be to raise the price of the manufactured article, to diminish the demand, and curtail our export trade, he, with a practical knowledge of business, not content with the facts which were stated, got up and told us in his vindication, and said, "Very true it may be that it will injure our foreign trade, and that is now hardly worth having;—what would the country suffer if we lost it?" When we have a statement of that kind from an hon. gentleman who represents a great commercial and manufacturing town like Birmingham—is not the statement of the hon. member that if our foreign trade were ruined the country would not suffer—is not that statement enough and sufficient to awaken our minds to the unsoundness of his argument? Some hon. gentlemen, I think the hon. member for Finsbury (Mr. T. Duncombe), and the hon. member for Weymouth (Mr. R. Bernal), complained of her Majesty's government for offering an opposition to the motion of my noble friend. The hon. member for Weymouth said we could not deal with men as we could with chessmen, that we would not apply that principle to

the laws of political economy. The hon. member for Finsbury tells us to give way in time; that these men who are employed are determined to resist the proposition for twelve hours' labour, and that the sooner we capitulate the better; that their wish is to have ten hours' labour per day, and that a 'Ten Hours' Bill they will have. Sir, I deeply regret to hear an argument of this kind raised by a gentleman of the experience and authority of the hon. member for Weymouth, denying as he does the great principles of all our legislation in respect to the employment of capital, and which ought to be the sound principles of political economy; that is to say, the principles of wisdom matured by experience. I say, I deeply regret to hear hon. gentlemen abjure those as the leading principles; for, depend upon it, that will be a bad system if they take popular feeling and the popular will as the guides to legislation. If we are to concede now to those demands upon the ground that it is the promulgated wish and feeling of the people, and that they are the best judges of their own case, and of what constitutes their interests, will hon. gentlemen tell me how long it will be before similar appeals will be made, and when, proceeding on the same principle, much larger concessions will be demanded? I fear the interval will be short; indeed, the ground has already been laid for fresh demands. Here is an address of a body of men—I allude to "the miners' association of Great Britain and Ireland"—and they briefly state the nature of their demands; and, surely, acting on the principle which has been laid down, we ought to accede to these demands, because these people wish us to do so. And if the presumption be correct that these people are best acquainted with their own interests, clearly after they shall have established this precedent for concession, we shall have no alternative but to make further concessions. This is "the address of the turned-out miners of Claycross to a sympathising public." They state their grievances, and then set forth the remedy which they propose in these terms:—

"Having thus stated a few of our grievances, we now lay before you those boons we ask, yea, we would say demand, as a redress of those grievances. First, we wish to work eight hours per day, and no more. Secondly, we wish to receive 4s. per day. Thirdly, we wish to receive our wages weekly. Fourthly, we wish to be united for our protection.

"Friends and fellow-countrymen, we now appeal to your sympathies, and ask you in the name of justice, whether, to be buried in caverns of the earth, inhaling the most obnoxious air for eight hours a day, be not long enough?"

Whatever is morally wrong cannot be politically right. The united colliers however proceed—

"We ask you whether we are exorbitant in our demands, when we ask 4s. for eight hours' toil, hewing from the bowels of the earth so useful a commodity as coals, our lives always being in the most imminent danger, every moment threatening us with the most horrible death, and no provision whatever being made for our wives and children except the cold bastille.

"Fellow-countrymen, we feel confident that when you have read this (which is but a shadow of our grievances), you will be ready to render us that support which the urgency of our case demands at your hands, and that you will likewise be ready to acknowledge that we are no way exorbitant in our demands.

"We remain, your suffering fellow-countrymen,

"THE TURNED-OUT COLLIERIES."

This is the address to a sympathising public; and upon the same principle on which we are now asked to legislate, I contend it ought to be presumed these persons are the best judges of their own interest; so, on the same principle, you ought to concede the point, that men ought not to be confined at work in the bowels of the earth—that they should not labour more than eight hours a-day, and that four shillings a-day ought to be their reward. But I believe that nothing could be more injurious to the best interests of these people than an acquiescence in their demands. I will not act upon the presumption that they are better judges of their interests than the legislature; and I will not abandon them because they demand these things. It would be no vindication to us to say, that we acted in communion with the feelings of those who raised these demands. No, Sir,

"Everture domos totas optantibus Ipse  
Di faciles."

Or, as it has been happily paraphrased—

“How nations sink by darling schemes oppressed,  
When vengeance listens to the rash request.”

But vengeance will not arise. Our duty is to take a comprehensive view of all the great interests, commercial, political, social, and moral, of all classes of this great empire. It is a maxim of distributive justice, a maxim of law, a technical rule, in the administration of justice—“*volenti non fit injuria*”—that injury cannot be done to him who consents to it; but you, devoted to perform the duties of watching the welfare of a great country, you cannot act upon that principle. And it cannot be a greater proof of your possessing attributes appropriate to the duties of legislation, that you reverse the maxim “*volenti non fiat injuria*,” and you tell the people, “We will resist your wishes in order to promote your welfare.” “We will discharge the duty assigned to us, on account of our being able to take a more comprehensive and more beneficent view than you are.” I protest, then, against the doctrine, that we are to concede because it is the popular will. If we are satisfied that it is not for the popular interests, then it is our painful but necessary duty to resist. If this House be of a different opinion—if you are satisfied that you must make this great experiment on labour—or if you think concession is inevitable, and that you must give way to the wishes and feelings of the people—be it so! But if you take that course, and if you resolve (as you cannot but do in consistency) to pursue it, you must—I say it with all respect—you must do so under other auspices, and under guides who can trace a clearer and a better way than can the present administration. The noble lord says that we ought not to attach so much importance to this question, that it is a question not of principle but of degree; that the majority will be composed of conflicting elements, and that we ought not, therefore, to insist upon acting on our own opinions. I say, that attaching the importance we do to this question, and foreseeing its results, it is our duty in this case to act upon, and to enforce our opinions. There is no other way in which we can avert that which we believe to be a serious evil. It may be that, by the combination to which the noble lord refers, you may succeed; but there are occasions when it is the duty of a government to refuse to be the instruments of carrying into effect the decisions of such combinations. I believe this to be one of those cases. I know not what the result may be this night; but this I know, that I shall, with a perfectly safe conscience, if the result be unfavourable to my views, retire with perfect satisfaction into a private station, wishing well to the result of your legislation, but for myself prepared to pursue that more rugged but not inglorious path of duty—prepared to resist concessions which, though popular, I believe to be injurious, and to consult the public interest at the expense of popular favour.

The House divided on the question, that the clause be read a second time:—Ayes, 159; Noes, 297; majority, 138. Bill passed.

## BANK CHARTER—THE CURRENCY.

MAY 20, 1844.

SIR ROBERT PEEL, in moving the Order of the Day for the House going into Committee on the Bank of England Charter Acts, said: Sir, I should feel very unwilling to interpose any observations of mine, before the commencement of the discussion on the resolutions which I am about to move, and would content myself with moving at present, that the House do agree to those resolutions, if I did not think it would be for the convenience of many members who are likely to take a part in the discussion, and for the benefit of the discussion itself, that I should make some explanations on particular points, with respect to which, I think it probable that questions will be asked. I, therefore, think it better to anticipate many of those questions and give to them in a connected form the answers which I must give separately, if they are separately put. It was necessary, as the House will bear in mind, for her majesty's government to frame their measure, and for me, as the organ of that government, to make the statement which I submitted on the 6th of May,

without the advantage of communicating with parties whose opinions on such a measure as that which we proposed were justly entitled to great weight. Entire secrecy, however, in all matters calculated to affect the currency, was absolutely necessary; and, however much we might feel disposed to confide in the honour and integrity of many individuals, yet, we thought it advisable to forego the advantage of private communications; and, having formed our opinion on the evidence taken by committees and public documents within our control, to submit our views to parliament. If, after the public explanation of these views, and after the opportunity afforded to us of hearing the opinions of others, we had seen reason to modify our own, we should have no hesitation in doing so. But nothing has occurred during the interval which has elapsed which induces her majesty's government to vary, in its leading principles, the plan announced by me on the 6th of May. There are, however, points of detail, in respect to which I have explanations to give and modifications to propose. I will first refer to that part of the plan which concerns the Bank of England and its connection with the government. The House will no doubt recollect, that when I proposed the plan on the 6th of May, I suggested to the House, that it might be desirable that the Bank of England should make its issues upon securities and upon bullion,—partly on the one and partly on the other; that the amount of securities on which issues should be made should be limited to £14,000,000, and that the remainder of the issues of the bank should take place on bullion alone, the amount of that additional circulation being subject to the influence of the exchanges. At the same time, I foresaw a case in which it might be consistent with the principle of the proposed measure, and in which it should be perfectly legitimate, that the Bank of England should add to its issue upon securities. Assuming the circulation of the joint-stock banks and of the country banks to be about £8,000,000 at the present time, it is possible, either through the occasional failure of some of these establishments, or from the voluntary liquidation of their accounts, or in consequence of an agreement with the Bank of England, that some portion of their existing circulation may be discontinued. Suppose the country circulation to be £8,000,000, and that in consequence of voluntary agreements or other causes it should be diminished by one-half, to £4,000,000; in that case, it might be perfectly fit that the Bank of England, in order to supply the void thus created, should issue Bank of England notes, and that that issue should in part take place upon securities. I proposed originally, that the Bank of England should not be permitted to increase its issues upon securities except after communication made to the government, and with the consent of three members of the government—the First Lord of the Treasury, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the President of the Board of Trade. I did not reserve that power of increasing the issues upon securities, from any distrust of the great principles which I laid down; I did not propose that power of interference on the part of the government in order to meet any possible, but unforeseen contingencies; but in order to meet *bona fide*, a particular case; namely, the cessation by issue by banks other than the Bank of England. On consideration of that part of the plan, I think it would be advisable, if possible, to prevent all direct interference in this matter on the part of the executive government. At the same time, I do not think it would be advisable to give to the bank an absolute power by law to increase its circulation upon securities, in every case of the withdrawal of country notes without exception. I can foresee cases wherein a void may be created in the country circulation, without a corresponding necessity for an increased issue upon securities. Take the case at present: the bank is possessed of a great amount of bullion, not less than £16,600,000. The banking department of the Bank of England will be possessed of not less than £30,000,000 of bank-notes, £14,000,000 issued on securities, and £16,000,000 on bullion; a great proportion of these bank-notes will necessarily lie dormant in the coffers of the banking department, because it is not probable that more than £22,000,000 can be made available for the supply of the legitimate demands of commerce. Supposing then a void to be created (in the county of Cornwall for instance), a void of, say £200,000, by the withdrawal of country notes from circulation, I am not at all prepared to say that the Bank of England ought at once to increase its issue of notes upon securities. Why should not the country banks apply for some portion of the dormant notes in the Bank of England to supply this void, receiving from the bank a per centage on

the issue of Bank of England notes? If it should be desirable to issue fresh notes on securities, then the bank should have the means of issuing them; but I do not think it advisable that, under all circumstances, the supply of the void should be provided for by the increase of issue on securities. I propose to reconcile these two objects in a manner which appears to me unexceptionable, avoiding any direct interference on the part of the executive. I propose, in the preamble of the clause, to recite distinctly what are the grounds which, in the opinion of parliament, will justify an increased issue by the bank on securities; these are, the failure of a country bank, the voluntary withdrawal by a country bank of its issues, or an undertaking by a country bank to abolish its own circulation upon the condition of being supplied with Bank of England notes. The recital of this in the preamble will manifest the intentions of parliament. I propose, then, that the bank, if it should desire to make an increased issue of notes upon securities, should not be allowed to do so except upon permission given by her Majesty in council, such permission to be published immediately afterwards in the *London Gazette*. I prefer this course to giving the bank an absolute power, at its own unfettered discretion, to increase its issue of notes upon securities. I am certain that, while the present management of the bank continues, that power would not be unduly taken advantage of; but still it is advisable to guard against the possibility of abuse. I propose, therefore, not to permit the increase of securities except with the sanction of the privy council, and except, also, on the express condition that the amount of additional securities shall not exceed two-thirds of the amount of issue, the remainder of the issue taking place upon bullion. There is another point of great importance connected with the issues of the Bank of England, to which I did not direct the attention of the House on the last occasion. The question is, what shall be the definition of "bullion," as the foundation of issue? Shall the bank be required to issue notes upon gold coin or gold bullion alone? or shall the bank be permitted to issue notes in exchange for silver as well as gold? Hitherto, silver has always been included in the return of bullion made by the bank. "Bullion" includes not merely gold coin of our mint, but gold in bars, foreign gold coin, and also silver. Shall we restrict the issues that are to take place upon bullion exclusively to gold, or shall issues be permitted upon silver; and if permitted, to what extent? A rigid adherence to principle would seem to require that gold alone should be the foundation of issue; that the amount of notes should fluctuate with the influx and reflux of gold. But I doubt whether we may not permit at least a partial issue of notes upon silver, without any departure from principle, and with great convenience to commerce. I propose, of course, to require that the obligation to pay notes in gold, and to issue notes in exchange for gold, shall remain in full force. The bank must pay its notes in gold at the rate of £3 : 17 : 10½, and must issue notes in exchange for gold, receiving the gold, if it be bullion, at a certain estimated rate, so much less than £3 : 17 : 10½, as shall be sufficient to cover the expense of coinage; the rate will probably be £3 : 17 : 9 per ounce. If an issue on silver be permitted, that issue must be with the voluntary consent of the party offering silver or receiving silver in exchange for notes. The reasons in favour of permitting the issue on silver with such consent are these:—The facility of exporting silver in preference to gold, when such export is expedient, is the true remedy against the inconvenience of our standard differing from that of other countries; and unless the circulation department is allowed to issue against silver, that inconvenience might occasionally be severely felt. So long as a silver standard is not recognised, and silver coin is used only as tokens under 40s., no quantity of silver likely to be in the bank can effect the standard value of the gold sovereign; but the sale of that silver may save useless coining of sovereigns, and answer the same purpose. Silver generally arrives from America, and latterly from China, in large amounts, and at pretty regular periods. If the bank is restricted from purchasing that silver, it will always be bought by merchants, who will export it immediately, the principal demand being for the continent. No capitalist will find it to his advantage to hold it, the variations in price seldom, if ever, compensating him for the loss of interest. When the exchange is low, and the price of silver high, this export acts advantageously in liquidation of payments due to foreign countries; but when the exchange is high and silver low, the silver will sell at a lower price than if the bank were allowed to buy it, and it will be exported solely for the purpose

of bringing back gold, the expense of the export of the silver, and the import of the gold, being an actual loss on the transaction. The practice of the bank has been to buy bar silver at 4*s.* 11½*d.*, and dollars at 4*s.* 9½*d.*, which, at the French mint prices, is equal to buying gold at 77*s.* 9*d.* When the exchanges have fallen, and there has been a demand for remittances to the continent, the bank has sold the silver, and such sale has answered all the purposes of gold, has left a small profit to the bank, and saved the expense of exchanging silver for gold. An unnecessary export of silver, that is, an export when it is not required to rectify the exchanges, causes a momentary rise in the exchange, which again falls back to its original rate so soon as the operation is ended. This momentary rise in the exchange, so long as it lasts, is prejudicial to all parties who may have to draw bills upon the continent in payment for goods and other exports. A stock of silver in the bank is convenient to our trade, particularly with India and China. Merchants often require that metal as a remittance, and would have to send to the continent for it at a greater expense, if they did not find a supply at the bank. But if the bank is absolutely restricted from the issue of notes upon silver, the stock of silver retained by the bank will be a very limited one, as it will not answer the purpose of the bank to purchase silver and hold it as a part of its assets in the banking department. For these reasons I am inclined to propose that the bank shall have the power of issuing notes on the deposits of silver. There should, I think, be a limit to the extent to which this issue shall be allowed. If we provide that the amount of silver on which issues may take place shall not exceed one-fourth of the amount of gold—for instance, if there be four millions issued upon gold, permitting an issue upon silver to the extent of one million—we shall probably ensure the maintenance of such a stock of silver as may give facilities for rectifying the exchanges and supplying the demands of commerce, and incur no risk of infringing upon that principle which will impose a positive obligation upon the bank to receive gold in exchange for notes, and to pay notes in gold coin on demand. These are the only points on which I have any explanation to offer so far as the Bank of England is concerned. I proceed to points connected with the affairs of joint-stock banks and private banks. It is proposed that every bank now exercising, *bonâ fide*, the privilege of issue, or rather, I should say, which did exercise it on the 6th of May last, should be permitted to enjoy that privilege within certain limits; that in the case of each bank, the bank-officer should make up an account of the amount of issues for two years preceding the 6th of May, 1844, and that in each case the average amount of such issue should be the maximum of future issue. It is proposed that each bank shall make a return to the stamp office of its daily issues; that this return shall be made on some day in the week following, to be named by the stamp office, and that the average amount of issues during the preceding week shall not exceed the maximum which the bank is allowed to issue. Originally it was proposed that the issue of no single day should exceed the maximum; but in order to prevent the attachment of penalties to an inadvertent excess of issue on some one particular day, it will be more convenient to take the average of the weekly issue, and to require that that average shall not exceed the maximum. There are some cases in which, within the period of two years, there has been a union of banks, in which one bank has purchased the business of another bank—the goodwill of the concern; and in such a case, if we take the average amount of the issues of the surviving bank for two years, that might not be perfectly fair, because the present amount of united issue might greatly exceed the amount which would appear upon the average of the single bank for the period of two years. In the bill, therefore, I shall provide for cases where there has been a union under contract and written agreement, upon that contract and written agreement being furnished to the stamp office. Our wish is, to reconcile the establishment of a great principle to existing interests, with as little danger and inconvenience as possible. I have been asked what I propose with respect to branch banks—“May joint-stock banks now in existence add to the number of their branches?” My answer is, They may; but they must not upon that account increase the maximum of their circulation. They may transfer business from an existing branch to another branch hereafter to be constituted, but in no case must the transfer lead to an increase of the maximum of permitted circulation. We know the total maximum at present to be about £8,000,000.

That is about the amount of issue in England and Wales, calculated upon the average of the last two years; and we intend, as far as we can, to give to the Bank of England, which is to have controlling power over issues, the assurance that in no case can that aggregate amount be exceeded. I have been asked this question—"Supposing there should be now two private banks with three partners each—will you object to the consolidation of those private banks, and the carrying on of the joint concern as one private bank with six partners? and what would be the amount of issue in that case to which the united bank would be entitled?" I do not propose to prevent such a consolidation; and I consider that the united bank should have the power of issuing an amount of notes equal to the aggregate amount of the two banks when separate. In respect of branches, the law requires amendment. I doubt the policy which some banks have pursued of establishing very numerous branches. I doubt whether banks having fifty or sixty branches—some in very small towns, renting expensive houses, and appointing agents with considerable salaries—can derive profit from such a course. It is the great competition which exists, and the desire to monopolise the circulation, which has probably led to it. The law, however, offers no impediment: it rather encourages the extension of branches, because the law requires the payment of duty for four branches, and no more; that is to say, a joint-stock bank taking out a licence for four branches has the power to establish an unlimited number without any further payment. Now, we will not object to the establishment of new branches, but we propose to require payment for the licence for each new branch that may be established. I propose, therefore, if any bank establishes a new branch, that it shall be required to take out a fresh separate licence, the cost of which amounts to about £30. I have also been asked, "Do we propose that joint-stock banks shall have the liberty to purchase up the right of the circulation of private banks?" We are willing, so long as the character of the institution is not changed, to admit the consolidation; but we do not propose to permit a joint-stock bank to increase its circulation by purchasing the right of issue of a private bank. I have been asked, again, "Will you permit the substitution of partners? Will you allow the son to be placed in the position of his father?" I say, certainly. We can give no guarantee as to the continuance of this privilege of issue. We think parliament has a perfect right at any time, if the privilege be abused, to apply an immediate remedy. So long, however, as the present system exists, we advise the House not to attempt a vexatious and unnecessary interference with these concerns. We should therefore permit the substitution of the son for the father as a partner. We are of opinion also, that to permit the entrance of a new partner into a private bank may be advantageous to the public as well as to the bank itself. A wealthy man may be desirous to add his capital and his responsibility to the bank; and to such a course we oppose no objection. It is said, "Suppose the admission of new partners be carried to such an extent that the character of the partnership should be totally changed; suppose there be six new partners instead of the six old ones; will you permit this wholesale substitution?" We recommend that we should not make the attempt to prohibit it by law. Such a substitution may seem an abuse of the conceded privilege of issue; but we deprecate any thing like unnecessary and vexatious intermeddling. It would be easy to evade any enactment intended to prevent extensive substitution of partners. There is an important stipulation which we propose to make with the Bank of England, and which we think to be just to other banks. Some of those banks have inquired whether we would permit the discontinuance of the arrangements made by them with the Bank of England for the issue of notes of the Bank of England, and the substitution of a corresponding amount of their own notes, thus increasing the issue of their own notes beyond the average of the two years? We do not propose to permit that exchange of notes. We do not propose that any bank, having entered into an arrangement with the Bank of England, shall be allowed to discontinue the Bank of England notes, and to resume their own notes; but, if we refuse that to the private bank, we should give that private bank a guarantee that the Bank of England will grant the accommodation of Bank of England notes upon as favourable terms as it was before held. We propose, with the full consent of the Bank of England, that any bank wishing to relinquish its connection with the Bank of England may have the power of doing so; but it shall not, in that case, be allowed to resume its own issues. If, on the other hand,

it wishes to continue its connection, the Bank of England shall be compelled to continue the supply of Bank of England notes upon terms not less disadvantageous than the present. I must here advert to a change which the bank is about to make in its arrangements in respect to the issue of Bank of England notes by other banks. These arrangements are at present of a twofold nature. Some banks are allowed by the Bank of England a commission of 1 per cent. on the amount of notes actually in circulation; others are permitted as an equivalent for a 1 per cent. commission, to open a discount account with the bank, and to have bills discounted at 3 per cent. for an amount varying between certain prescribed limits. The bank proposes to discontinue the discount account, and to act with respect to all banks on one uniform rule, making an allowance to each of 1 per cent. on the amount of Bank of England notes actually issued. I do not think there is any other point of importance with respect to which I have explanation to offer; and here, perhaps, I ought to close, and permit the House to proceed to discussion upon the resolutions. But I am told that my chain of argument the other night was incomplete; that there was no necessary connection between my premises and my conclusions; that I did not show the necessity of interfering with the circulation of joint-stock banks or country banks; that I did not establish the policy of giving an increased control to the Bank of England over other banks. Now, I am not conscious that any link in the chain of argument was wanting. I attempted to show that competition amongst the issuers of notes was a bad principle—that the same arguments which support competition in the supply of other articles, did not apply to the supply of paper currency. I attempted to show that where there is an unlimited number of issues, there is no feeling of individual responsibility; and that no man, whatever his desire might be, would sacrifice his interests for the public good, when he knew that his neighbours would not follow his example. I also attempted to show from the admission of the representatives of issuing banks, that their practice was at variance with the principle which ought to regulate a paper currency; that there was no reference to the exchanges; that, as it was once said by a private banker, “there is no more regard to the exchanges than to the snow upon the mountains.” I attempted to show, from the same admissions, that increased prices led to increased issues; and that there might, therefore, be a stimulus to speculation at the very time when there ought to be discouragement. I cited the example of the United States, for the purpose of proving that competition in issue, though controlled by unlimited responsibility of partners, and by the promised convertibility of paper into coin, was no security against insolvency of banks and general derangement of all monetary transactions. If, however, there be any who consider the proof defective, who think sufficient ground has not been shown for checking the privilege of issue, and increasing the control of one central authority over the paper currency, I shall be glad to fortify my position by additional arguments. If the example of the United States be not admitted as a rule for us, I am quite content to look at home, and to examine the results of our own system on our own interests. I will endeavour to prove to your conviction, from the domestic experience of twenty years, that now is the time when, if you are wise, you will take security against the unlimited competition in issues, will increase the control of one superintending bank, and will prevent alternations and vicissitudes in that medium of exchange which is to regulate the value of every article in this country. Let us review the several periods occurring within the last twenty years, when there has been a derangement in the monetary affairs of the country, and when, in order to maintain the convertibility of paper into gold, there has been the necessity for sudden contraction of issues. There have been, I think, four such periods—in 1825, in 1832, in 1835-36, and in 1838-39. Let us see in three of these periods what has been the action of the country banks. In November, 1823, the bullion in the possession of the bank was £13,760,000; in November, 1825, it was reduced to £3,012,000. If the principle of a metallic standard and the doctrine as to the variation of paper with the state of the exchanges be admitted, there ought to have been a considerable decrease in the amount of paper. But it is estimated that between November, 1823, and November, 1825, there was an increase in the amount of country bank paper of from £4,000,000 to £8,000,000. Again, on the 1st of January, 1834, the bullion in the Bank of England amounted to £9,948,000; in 1837 it had suffered a diminution of about



£6,000,000, being reduced to £4,071,000, while the country bank circulation had increased from £10,142,000 in 1834, to £11,031,000 in 1837, and in the middle of August, 1836, when you were at the very verge of the crisis, the country bank circulation was actually £12,000,000. On the 26th of June, 1838, the bullion in the bank was £9,722,000; in June, 1839, it was reduced to £4,344,000, and the country bank circulation, instead of being diminished, was again increased. It amounted to £11,740,000 when the bank had £10,000,000 of gold, and it was increased to £12,725,000, when the bank had only £4,300,000 of bullion. Surely these facts, taken in conjunction with the admissions of the country bankers as to the principles on which their issues are regulated, are decisive proofs of defects in our present system of currency. I do not mean to say that country banks or joint-stock banks were alone responsible for the events that occurred at those periods. I do not defend the conduct of the Bank of England throughout the whole of those periods, but assigning to the bank its full share of the responsibility, there is abundant evidence that the principle of unlimited competition, that the increase of issue with the increase of prices, that the unwillingness or inability to regulate the issue of paper by a close observance of the state of the exchange, is fraught with danger. I do not underrate the importance and value of the banking establishments of this country. They are most useful instruments for facilitating the distribution and profitable use of capital, according to the wants of the community, enabling those who require the temporary advance of capital to procure it on the most advantageous terms from those who can supply it. I do full justice to the integrity and high character of the great majority of those who are connected with these establishments. But, if there be defects in the system on which they act, it is our duty to apply a remedy: if there has been an abuse of the privilege of issue; if great losses have been sustained by innocent parties, both as shareholders in joint-stock banks, as depositors, and as the holders of promissory notes of private banks, which have become insolvent—we are bound to take whatever precautions legislation can provide against the recurrence of such evils. Can we review the history of private banks within the last thirty or forty years, and deny the necessity for legislative interference? In the years 1814, 1815, and 1816, the failures of country banks amounted in number to 240. The number of commissions of bankruptcy was 89. The lamentable occurrences of 1825 and 1826 must be fresh in the recollection of many of us. With regard to the last few years, a return has recently been laid before the House, which demonstrates the necessity for legislative interference. I hold in my hand a return of the number of private banks which became bankrupt in the years 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, and 1843, with the amount of dividends paid, so far as the same can be ascertained. The following is the result:—

| Year. | Number of Bankruptcies. | Of which were Banks of Issue. | Number that paid Dividends, and Amount of Dividends.                            |
|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1839  | 9                       | —                             | 1 under 5s. 1 under 10s. 7 no dividend.   |
| 1840  | 24                      | 8                             | 2 under 5s. 4 under 10s. 1 under 15s. 17 no dividend.                           |
| 1841  | 26                      | 11                            | { 5 under 5s. 6 under 10s. 1 under 15s. 1 under 20s.<br>13 no dividend.         |
| 1842  | 12                      | 4                             | 2 under 5s. 9 no dividend. 1 div. not ascertained.                              |
| 1843  | 11                      | 6                             | { 2 under 5s. 1 under 10s. 1 under 15s. 1 under 20s.<br>6 div. not ascertained. |

With respect to the bankers who have become bankrupts, I have before me returns furnished by the bankruptcy office, from which I have made extracts. They refer to failures which have taken place since the 1st of January 1839, and give, in some cases, the amount of the assets, in others the causes of failure. The failures to which these extracts apply were ten in number. The names of the concerns I do not mention.

ESTATES OF BANKERS WHO HAVE BECOME BANKRUPTS, FROM THE 1st OF JANUARY, 1839, TO THE 1st OF APRIL, 1844.

## CAUSE OF FAILURE.

In No.

1. Speculation on Spanish Bonds.
2. Banker a spirit merchant; the spirit trade was obliged to pay much more than its whole profits to the family of the banker's father, and acted as a drain upon the bank.
3. Advances to the partners, and bad speculations entered into by more than one of the partners.
4. Loss on Railway Speculations.
5. The bank had been insolvent for many years. Loss by bad debts, £145,600.
6. The banker succeeded to a considerable property, mortgaged his estate, overdraw his private account with the bank, issued promissory notes to the amount of £14,000, bearing interest to depositors of small sums among the humble classes of society, £5,590 of promissory notes payable to bearer on demand.

In No.

7. This bank had been insolvent for many years. Lost large sums in a sugar refinery, and £67,000 in a commercial house at Glasgow.
8. Uncle and nephew partners. In the course of eleven years the nephew dissipated £100,000 of the partnership assets. The uncle died in 1808, leaving a large fortune among his relations. The nephew committed suicide in October, 1840, when the frauds were discovered.

## ESTATES.

9. Liabilities £157,960. Dividend none. Assets £20.
10. Date of fiat 12th July, 1842. No dividend yet made. Bankrupt had certain race-horses, from which the sum of £750 5s. was netted.

Surely the conclusion we must draw from the details to which I have referred, both with respect to the frequent failures of banks, and the loss and suffering entailed upon their creditors, is in favour of legislative interference. It is said that the banks which failed were not in all cases banks of issue; but I propose, not merely a check upon the privilege of issue, but an amendment of the law under which banks not being banks of issue are constituted. Should these measures receive the sanction of parliament, they will not, in my opinion, limit the extent of legitimate accommodation which banks can afford to those who are engaged either in manufactures or in agriculture. I know that it is supposed by some that the issuing power of country banks is intimately connected with, and essential to, the maintenance of agricultural prosperity; and that the paper of the Bank of England cannot be made to serve the purposes to which country paper is applied. Now, let it be remembered, that in a very extensive district surrounding the metropolis, the circulation is in a great measure composed of Bank of England paper. In a circular area round London having a radius of sixty-five miles, the only competitors in issue with the Bank of England are certain private banks. That area includes a very extensive and important agricultural district. It includes the counties of Middlesex, Essex, Kent, Surrey, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, with a great part of Suffolk and of Northamptonshire. Now, it appears, from the returns made to the Stamp Office, that throughout this great agricultural district the total amount of the circulation of private banks is only £1,329,000. The whole of the remainder of the circulation is supplied by the Bank of England. In some also of the chief manufacturing districts of this country the paper of the Bank of England constitutes almost the exclusive medium of exchange. I mention these facts for the purpose of quieting the apprehension that such a restriction as that which I propose, upon the issues of country paper, will unduly lower the prices of agricultural produce, or diminish the legitimate accommodation which the dealers in capital and money can afford to the trader or the agriculturist. It is said that the Bank of England will not have the means which it has heretofore had for supporting public credit, and of affording assistance to the mercantile world in times of commercial difficulty. Now, in the first place, the means of supporting credit are not means exclusively possessed by banks. All who are possessed of unemployed capital, whether bankers or not, and who can gain an adequate return by the advance of capital, are enabled to afford, and do afford, that aid which it is supposed by some that banks alone are enabled to afford. In the second place, it may be a question whether there be any permanent advantage in the maintenance of private or public credit, unless the means of maintaining it are derived from the *bonâ fide* advance of capital, and not from a temporary increase of promissory notes issued for a special purpose. Some apprehend that the proposed restrictions

upon issue will diminish the power of the bank to act with energy at the period of monetary crisis and commercial alarm and derangement. But the object of the measure is to prevent (so far as legislation can prevent) the recurrence of those evils from which we suffered in 1825, 1836, and 1839. It is better to prevent the paroxysm than to excite it, and trust to desperate remedies for the means of recovery. I now commit these measures to the consideration and judgment of the House. They will be thought by some to fall short in the practical application of the principles on which they are founded; by others, probably, to effect too hasty and extensive an alteration of the system which now exists. By the great majority of this House, I trust, they will be deemed a safe and just compromise between conflicting considerations, reconciling the establishment of sound principles with a fair and liberal treatment of private interests. The right hon. baronet concluded by moving the first of the following resolutions:—

1. That it is expedient to continue to the Bank of England, for a time to be limited, certain of the privileges now by law vested in that corporation, subject to such conditions as may be provided by any act to be passed for that purpose.
2. That it is expedient to provide by law, that the Bank of England should henceforth be divided in two separate departments; one exclusively confined to the issue and circulation of notes, the other to the conduct of banking.
3. That it is expedient to limit the amount of securities upon which it shall henceforth be lawful for the Bank of England to issue promissory notes payable to bearer on demand, and that such amount shall only be increased under certain conditions to be prescribed by law.
4. That it is expedient to provide by law, that a weekly publication should be made by the Bank of England of the state both of the circulation and of the banking departments.
5. That it is expedient to repeal the law, which subjects the notes of the Bank of England to the payment of composition for stamp duty.
6. That, in consideration of the privileges to be continued to the Bank of England, the rate of fixed annual payment to be made by the bank to the public shall be £180,000 per annum, and shall be defrayed by deducting the said sum from the sum now by law payable to the bank for the management of the public debt.
7. That, in the event of any increase of the securities upon which it shall be lawful for the bank to issue such promissory notes as aforesaid, a further annual payment shall be made by the bank to the public over and above the said fixed payment of £180,000 equal in amount to the net profit derived from the promissory notes on such additional securities.
8. That it is expedient to prohibit by law the issue of promissory notes payable to bearer on demand by any bank not issuing such notes on the 6th day of May 1844, or by any bank thereafter to be established in any part of the United Kingdom.
9. That it is expedient to provide by law, that such banks in England and Wales as on the 6th day of May, 1844, issued promissory notes, payable to bearer on demand, shall continue to issue such notes, subject to such conditions and to such limitations as to the amount of issue as may be provided for by any act to be passed for that purpose.
10. That it is expedient to provide by law for the weekly publication of the amount of promissory notes, payable to bearer on demand, circulated by any bank authorised to issue such notes.
11. That it is expedient to make provision by law with regard to joint-stock banking companies.

In reply to some remarks by Mr. Charles Buller—Sir Robert Peel observed, the hon. gentleman had said, that many banks had failed which were not banks of issue; but when he spoke he was addressing himself to the memorial of the joint-stock banks, in which it was stated that the present system of banking was perfect, or so good that they deprecated any alteration. He had stated, that it was difficult to maintain this perfection after the experience of the last twenty-five years, when he found that during three years 240 banks had failed, and that during the last four or five there had been eighty-five failures, it could not be inferred that the present sys-

tem was excluded from all possible improvement. He thought he had proved that the powers of issue were a great encouragement to the establishment of banks and to their mismanagement. It was true that other banks might mismanage their concerns, but he was going to try and improve the system of banking generally; he was about to remedy the evils under which the joint-stock banks laboured: he was about to provide that, on the establishment of joint-stock banks, a certain portion of the capital should be paid up, and he was about to introduce new modes of management. Although he could not control every private bank, although there might still be transactions in railway shares, and in Spanish bonds, yet he would call upon the public to exercise vigilance and caution in their transactions, and if they placed their confidence in banks which were badly managed, they must suffer for it. He rejoiced that the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Baring), and the hon. member for Birmingham, made so near an approach to his views. He had never done the latter hon. gentleman the injustice of supposing that he was the author of the letters he had quoted, the letters might be the production of one of the hon. member's constituents. He was glad to hear, however, that the hon. gentleman advocated a standard price, only that he thought it should be in corn, and not in gold. The hon. member deprecated any interference with banks, and yet he advocated a law which fixed a certain amount of bullion; but how could the hon. gentleman deprecate such an interference when he would have enacted such a law? If paper were to be convertible into gold, what would be the details of the hon. gentleman's measure by which we would compel the bank to make the conversion. He said, "here are ten millions which you are never to touch, here is a sacred deposit." [Mr. Muntz had not advocated non-interference with the bank.] How a bank which was always liable to pay on demand could be made to do so, when there was a fixed amount of bullion, he could not tell. My hon. friend (Mr. Newdegate), continued the right hon. baronet, has put a question to me, which is important, because, although it was put briefly, yet it includes the chief objections which are felt by many to the measure which I propose; and I am anxious, both on that account, and from feelings of esteem for a young member of this House, who will, I am sure, distinguish himself, to give an answer to it. The question of my hon. friend was this—"How far the extension of the principle of the act of 1819, as carried out by the alteration of the system of issues, and by the reorganization of banking establishments, taken together, as now proposed by the government, will, by limiting the amount of circulating medium and the facilities for circulating to the average of the last two years, without reference to the increase of production in this country, affect prices? For, if the quantity of commodities produced increase, and the amount of money remain the same, will not the price of commodities fall in proportion to the increase of their production? To this question my answer is, that the present measure is not an extension of the principle of the act of 1819—it is the fulfilment and complement of that act, but it does not carry the principle of a metallic standard farther than it was carried by the Act of 1819. That Act restored a metallic standard; it required that promissory notes should not be issued, excepting on the condition that they were convertible into gold at the will of the bearer. They are issued on that condition. Under the system that exists, they may not, for a time, conform in value to gold—they may be issued in excess—they may be the means of affording a greater degree of temporary accommodation than could be afforded by a metallic currency—they may increase prices, and create for a time the appearance of prosperity. But they do all this with the certainty of ultimate reaction,—the certainty that the time must come when, if you adhere to a metallic standard, and if you maintain it unaltered, that standard will assert its supremacy, will refuse to conform to the value of paper, and will require that paper shall conform to the value of gold. When the depreciation of the paper is sensible,—when it becomes a matter of notoriety, the law enjoining its equivalency to coin will be enforced by every holder of paper, from the man whose whole property is a single five-pound note, to the great capitalist who influences the foreign exchange by the extent of his dealings in money. The certain means of realising a small profit, will impel every holder of paper to demand coin in exchange. What advantages will there have been in the temporary accommodation, what advantage in the temporary increase of prices, if they are to be followed—as I contend they inevitably will—by such a contraction of paper as

will make it equal in value to coin? Let us not confound that accommodation which is afforded by the liberal advance of capital, that increase of prices which springs from general prosperity and increased demand, with the accommodation and increase of prices which rest on no surer foundation than an undue issue of paper. I call it an undue issue, if its value do not conform with that of the coin which it professes to represent, and which the law has made the measure of value. I have thus given to the question of my hon. friend that answer which I believe to be a satisfactory answer, provided that you admit that there is, and that there ought to be, a metallic standard. He had omitted to mention one evidence of the operation of inconvertible paper. In 1797 there were only 240 private banks, but the moment liability to convert was removed, more of these banks were established, and when they had to deal eight or ten years afterwards with them, their number had increased from 240 to about 800; it was because they found such great advantages in inconvertibility, that the banks of issue were so much increased.

In answer to a question from Mr. Thomas Baring—Sir R. Peel said, I understand my hon. friend to imply a doubt as to the policy of that part of the plan which will limit the issue of the bank upon securities to a gross amount, and will require that the profit of any issue upon securities that may be permitted, under certain circumstances, beyond that amount, shall belong to the public. My hon. friend asks, what inducement will the bank have to supply any void that may arise in the country circulation, since the bank is to have no profit for an issue made for that purpose? I answer, in the first place, that we must assume that the bank will feel an interest, apart from the mere consideration of pecuniary profit, in increasing its control over the general circulation, and thus diminishing the risk that the action of the bank upon the exchanges, whenever such action is necessary, can be counteracted by other issuers of paper. In the second place, the bank may protect itself from loss by supplying the void that may be created in the country circulation, and will thus have a direct pecuniary inducement to supply it. Suppose the notes of the bank, issued for the circulation of the metropolitan district, and for the general purposes of commerce, to amount to £22,000,000, and that the banking department has a supply of £6,000,000 of notes lying dormant, received from the issue department in exchange for gold; suppose also £2,000,000 of the country circulation to be withdrawn, and a demand therefore for an increased issue beyond the ordinary circulation of £22,000,000 to arise; it would in that case be a source of profit to the bank to supply the void from the stock of notes in the banking department, without requiring permission from the Queen in Council, to increase its issues upon securities. Let us now take the case of there being no stock of unissued notes in the banking department, justifying the supply of the void from that department. The bank would then have no alternative but to supply the void, with the consent of the Privy Council, by an issue upon securities beyond the amount of £14,000,000. The question is, what interest will the bank have in seeking permission to make such an issue, as the profit will belong to the government? I answer, that the bank, by obtaining such permission, will protect itself from a loss to which it will be otherwise liable. According to the assumption, the void in the currency takes place, and is not supplied by the bank from its ordinary resources. The notes remaining in circulation will then become more valuable; there will be an influx of gold; and that gold will be tendered to the bank, which must give notes in exchange for it. On that issue, there would not only be no profit, but there would be an absolute loss, amounting to the charge of the manufacture and the issue of notes, which, in the case supposed, will fall upon the bank. Should the increased issue take place upon securities, although the nett profit will belong to the public, yet the charges also, namely, the commission of one per cent. upon the issue, and the expense of the notes, must also be defrayed by the public; and it will be less disadvantageous to the bank, under the circumstances supposed, to issue notes upon an increased amount of securities than upon gold. He should be glad, the right hon. baronet continued in reference to Lord Worsley, to attempt to relieve the noble lord's anxiety with respect to country banks; the noble lord feared that, by taking an average of the last two years, there might be some inconvenient restriction on the issue of country banks, and, therefore, a diminution of the accommodation given to agriculturists. The noble lord said, that during a considerable portion of the last two years, there was a

depression in the price of agricultural produce, and there was a panic; and, therefore, it was unfair to take the last two years. Now he would just read the issues of country banks for the last six months. They were represented by these figures: £3,400,000, £4,900,000, £4,500,000, £4,800,000, £4,900,000, £4,900,000. These were the average monthly issues of country banks for the last six months, during which period there had been no panic, and no great depression of agricultural produce. Was he going to call for the reduction of these issues, an average which would tell inconveniently on the banks, and restrict their issues? Take the first six months which he was going to admit into the average; he must begin, of course, with May 1842. The noble lord would observe, that the last six months never in any case exceeded five millions. He would take the first six or eight months he was going to permit country banks to take into the average, and beginning with May, it was £3,360,000, £4,999,000, £5,100,000, £5,100,000, £5,098,000, £5,488,000, 4,434,000, £5,085,000. So that he was going to permit the country banks to have an average of two years, and he showed to the noble lord that the first six months of these two years exceeded, in every case but one, five millions; and in the last six months there was no depression of price, no panic, no want of accommodation. He asked the noble lord whether he had satisfied him that country banks could extend their accommodation. The noble lord said that Lincolnshire was a fair test. Now, he believed that Lincolnshire and Leicestershire were the counties in which there was the greatest variation in the amount of issues. At one time in Lincolnshire it was £4,100,000, at another time £4,500,000, the mean was £4,250,000. What could prevent the Leicester banks keeping £40,000 Exchequer bills, and to provide for an increased circulation of notes, by selling out £25,000 of the Exchequer bills, demand notes of the Bank of England, and supply the accommodation as usual with Bank of England notes? This was all he asked them to do. He did not ask them to make a deposit as of securities. All he asked of them was, if they wanted £25,000 more, to supply that out of capital, and not from credit. There were seventy banks, which contrived to give accommodation without any issues of their own. He left to these banks the power of issuing £4,250,000, and if on any occasion they wanted an excess, all he asked of them was to give security for that excess, to supply it from the capital.

Resolutions agreed to; House resumed, Resolutions to be reported.

## BANK CHARTER.—THE CURRENCY.

JUNE 13, 1844.

On the motion that the above bill be read a second time,—Mr. Hawes moved as an amendment, to substitute the words: "That no sufficient evidence has been laid before the House, to justify the proposed interference with banks of issue, in the management of their circulation."

SIR R. PEEL said, that having listened with great attention to the speeches which had been made in the course of the discussion, he could not reconcile the opinion of any one man who had spoken in favour of the motion of the hon. member for Lambeth, with the maintenance of the principle upon which this bill was founded. They all professed to recognise the great doctrine of a metallic currency—they all admitted that we ought to maintain a metallic standard, but there was not one of them, from the hon. gentleman who had commenced the debate, to the hon. gentleman who had just concluded his speech, who did not appear to entertain an opinion—whatever the professions might be—that a metallic standard ought to be abandoned. [Mr. Hawes: "No, no."] The hon. gentleman had certainly been loud in his professions of adherence to a metallic standard, and to the great principles upon which the report of the Bullion Committee was founded; but although the commencement of the hon. gentleman's speech was a declaration that the determination of that committee was right, yet the hon. gentleman argued that the facts which it had collected led to a different conclusion. The hon. gentleman said that paper was not depreciated during the suspension of cash payments. That he did not expect to hear, and he had never before heard such a declaration from any one who professed an

adherence to the opinion of the Bullion Committee. A declaration more hostile to that committee than for the hon. gentleman to state this night, in the year 1844, that during the suspension of cash payments inconvertible paper was not depreciated. What, then, were all the attacks upon the bill of 1819, he had never heard, for restoring a gold currency without foundation? Was it untrue that the agricultural produce of the kingdom was raised in price during the war, in consequence of an inconvertible paper currency, and did the return to cash payments make no difference whatever in all the engagements that had been entered into? The hon. gentleman said, you might have sent any quantity of gold to the continent at any time, and purchased articles as cheap there as in England, and realized as large a profit here; and the hon. gentleman referred to various articles for the purpose of showing that prices were not affected by the paper being inconvertible. Why, how vain was the discussion as to prices at particular periods, for the purpose of drawing any inference from them as to the state of the currency. Look at the prices of manufactured cotton. That was the argument which the late Mr. Alderman Waithman was continually using. He said, "While you require the same amount of taxes, the price of cotton goods has fallen off." But surely, with the improvements in machinery, with the reduction of the price of the raw material, and with our great command of capital, it would have been marvellous if there had not been a great decrease of price. And what inference did the hon. gentleman draw from the prices of those particular commodities with respect to the currency? Did the hon. gentleman know what took place with respect to silver during the Bank Restriction? The hon. gentleman said, "Oh, you must not estimate the depreciation by the price of gold." But did the hon. gentleman recollect, during the suspension of cash payments, an attempt to issue silver? That was not then a legal tender: it was not the standard of value. Certain dollars, however, were issued for the purpose of supplying the place of gold, and it was discovered that the silver dollars soon followed the gold guineas, and disappeared from circulation. The hon. gentleman said paper was not depreciated. But as an Order in Council was issued increasing the value of silver, and what had been issued at 4s., the Mint price, was allowed to circulate at 4s. 6d., and this kept the silver currency in circulation. A new value was given to the dollar, according to the depreciated value of the paper; and what you had attempted in vain to circulate at the Mint price, as soon as a new value was placed upon it, according to the depreciated paper, remained in circulation. For the hon. gentleman to contend that, during the inconvertible paper currency, it was not depreciated, and prices were not affected, was a blow at the report of the Bullion Committee, which he should not have expected from one who professed to adhere to its opinions. It was a contradiction of facts which he thought every man acknowledged. If the doctrine of the hon. gentleman were correct, he should not have escaped much abuse and calumny for attempting to restore gold currency in 1819. The hon. gentleman had referred to the United States, and to the pamphlet of M. Galatin, for the purpose of showing that the analogy of the United States was inapplicable to this country. Why should the example of the United States be inapplicable to this country? There were joint-stock banks in the United States—there was a paper currency, nominally convertible into gold on demand. As far as regarded the parties and their property, there was every appearance of a perfect guarantee for solvency; but there was unlimited competition of issue, and the consequence was bankruptcy and general failure. In 1811, there was in the United States, the State Bank, in some respects corresponding to the Bank of England—having an imperfect control over the issues, because it was well conducted, and maintained the principle of convertibility; and as the notes of other banks could be turned, by exchange, into notes of the central bank, it possessed some control over the issues of other banks. In 1811, the first central bank was abolished. In three years afterwards there was a universal suspension of cash payments, in consequence of that imperfect check having been removed. In a few years afterwards—about 1818, another central bank was established, and it ceased in 1833. Again, in a few years all the banks of the United States, twice in succession, were found suspending their specie payments. Was not that a strong proof of the advantage of a central bank, and of a complete control over the issues? This was an example of another country of great resources, with a large amount of capital, sufficient to command

good banking establishments; and if he showed that on two occasions, within a short period while a central bank existed, that other establishments were preserved, and that after the control of the central bank had been removed by the government, notwithstanding regulations to ensure solvency, notwithstanding the universal profession of convertibility, there occurred universal bankruptcy, and suspension of cash payments, he thought that was a case perfectly applicable to this country, and a proof of the advantages of central control. He would take the opinions of the two highest authorities in the United States on this subject. He could not name two higher authorities than Mr. Galatin and Mr. Webster. And what said Mr. Galatin, who had been quoted by the hon. member for Lambeth? He said that "The creation of new state banks to fill the chasm which was the natural consequence of the dissolution of the bank of the United States, and, as was usual under such circumstances, the expectations of great profits, had led to the establishment of a greater number than were wanted; and as the salutary regulating power of the bank of the United States no longer existed, the issues were increased beyond what circumstances rendered necessary,—that it was his deliberate opinion that the suspension might have been prevented at the time it took place, had the former bank of the United States been in existence—that the exaggerated increase of the state banks occasioned by its dissolution, would not have occurred had that bank still have retained power over those bodies, and checked their issues."

If the example of a great country, and the authority of great writers, could have any bearing upon this country, that example and that authority were in favour of his argument. But what said Mr. Webster, in his speech on the Treasury Bill, on the 12th of March 1838, effecting the banking of that country? "I lay it down as an unquestionable principle, that no paper can be made equal and kept equal to gold and silver, but such as is convertible into gold and silver on demand; but I have gone further, and still go further than this, and I contend that even convertibility, though itself indispensable, is not a certain and unfailing ground of reliance. There is a liability to excessive issues of gold even while paper is convertible at will. Of this there can be no doubt. Where, then, shall a regulator be found? What principle of prevention do we rely upon?"

Here was a gentleman, not indulging in speculation, but acquainted with the principles of banking in the United States, originally adhering to the doctrines of Adam Smith and Mr. Ricardo, that convertibility on demand was sufficient to check issues, yet, warned by experience, in his own country, acknowledging that with unlimited competition even convertibility on demand was not a security against over issue. If the United States were to be quoted at all, it was in favour of the principles embodied in the present bill. And what was the case in our own country? Did he propose to disturb any perfect and successful system of currency? He took it for granted that they all adhered to a metallic standard, and the principle of convertibility, but it was said, agreeing with those principles, that there was not sufficient ground for interference. Why, what was our experience during the last twenty years? In that period had we not many proofs of the necessity of legislative interference to maintain the principle of convertibility? There had been four monetary crises—in 1825, 1832, 1836-1837, and 1839—and there was in each of these an increase in the issues of country bank paper; in each there was proof that the issues were not made conformable to the exchanges, but that an increase of the country bank paper had taken place, when, if there were truth in the principle for which he contended, there ought to have been a reduction, and thus in each period there had subsequently arisen the necessity for a rapid and ruinous contraction. The hon. gentleman who had spoken last had said, that the Bank of England was always able to protect itself, and to prevent its notes from being discredited. He knew it was. He knew that when the paroxysm was at its height, and it became the duty of the bank to make great efforts, it could, by means of great sacrifices, save itself and ensure continued convertibility. The bank could always maintain its credit; it could always cover its own notes; but by a tremendous sacrifice of the mercantile and other interests. That was what he wished to prevent, and it was not to do that which had been attributed to him, of leaving the country banks wholly at the mercy of the Bank of England. So far was he from doing that, that he would compel the Bank of England to conform to certain principles, advantageous to the public and



to private bankers, which, at certain periods of monetary crises, the bank had neglected. He wished to prevent the bank from doing that which it has done—from issuing its notes to meet the demands for deposits. He said to the bank, there were certain principles laid down, and it must conform to them—that it might issue notes on securities, but to the limited amount of £14,000,000—the whole of the issue above that amount must be based on gold. But then it was said this would be a great restriction upon the issues. Now, they took security against the possibility of there being too great a restriction upon the issues, because if the bank restricted the issue of its notes till they became more valuable than coin, then every man had a right to take gold to the bank and get notes for it. That was his answer to the objection; and those who did not admit it to be a good answer, did not admit the principle upon which the measure is founded. The principle is, that as the paper promises to pay in gold, it ought to conform to gold; and he said it would be no accommodation whatever to commerce if bankers were to be allowed to coin their personal credit into money instead of their capital. He said then, that every precaution has been taken on the one hand, that the bank shall not issue paper beyond the proper amount, by compelling the bank to give notes in exchange for gold. And on the other hand, we take security that the bank shall not restrict its issues below the necessary amount, by giving to the holder of gold the power of demanding bank notes. But then it was said that restriction imposed upon the issue of private paper would subject the country to the greatest inconvenience. It was said, also, that the only effect of their interference in discrediting the paper issues of the private banks would be to make men invent some other species of paper credit for themselves, to be substituted for country notes. Now, if country paper were necessary to agricultural prosperity, why had not that question been answered which he had put before? Why was it that in eight or ten of the greatest agricultural counties the issue of the country paper does not exceed £1,300,000? He had shewn that in Sussex, Middlesex, Kent, Surrey, Cambridgeshire, Oxfordshire, part of Norfolk, and the greatest part of Suffolk, all situated within a radius of sixty-five miles from London,—that in all those counties the necessities of the district were provided for by an issue of country bank paper to the amount of only £1,300,000; and supposing that the country banks were to restrict that issue, do not believe that the Bank of England would refuse to supply its place. Or supposing the country banks should wish to substitute the Bank of England paper for their own—to deal with the Bank of England as no less than sixty banks dealt with it at this moment—the Bank of England would give them its paper and pay a commission of 1 per cent. on the use of it. If the restrictions on the issues of country paper would, as it has been said, lead to the issuing of bills of exchange to supply its place, why, he asked, have they not been issued within the districts to which he had referred? The Bank of England provides a circulation for that district, amounting, I believe, to £6,000,000, the remainder £1,300,000 being supplied by country bank paper. Why have not bills of exchange been used there? Because the circulation is sufficient, and because there is confidence in the Bank of England. It is said that the inhabitants of that district are accustomed to the use of Bank of England paper, but that there will be a prejudice in other parts of the country against it. Depend upon it, a very little experience would remove that difficulty, and that a very short trial would remove the prejudice which it is supposed exists against the circulation of Bank of England paper, which would soon be found acceptable in the agricultural districts. But would they tell him how it happened that in some of the principal manufacturing districts there are scarcely any banks of issue, and that the whole of their wants are supplied by Bank of England paper. Take Birmingham for example. He apprehended, that no great proportion of the paper used in that town consists of country notes. The Bank of England at this moment circulated £621,000 in notes in Birmingham, and he doubted if there was £100,000 more in country notes. [Mr. Muntz: Not so much.] Then that was the amount of paper circulation in that great manufacturing district. There they contrived to carry on their trade, and yet required only a paper circulation of £700,000, and still but £100,000 of that was in country notes. Were there any bills of exchange issued there to supply the deficiency of the circulation? If there were any apprehension as to the Bank of England paper, there could be a supply of country paper in the district; but the

proportions in which they circulated were as had been mentioned. If there were a deficiency, did bills of exchange supply it? [Mr. Gisborne believed they did.] He doubted it very much, at least he never heard that the circulation was supplied by bills of exchange. Of course there were bills of exchange used for the purpose of commerce; but he had never before heard that they had been issued for the purpose of supplying the local circulation of £5 notes. The circulation of Gloucester was supplied by the Bank of England with notes to the amount of £107,000. At Manchester it might be supposed that its great commercial transactions would be supplied by the notes of country banks. The Bank of England supplied it with a circulation of £2,167,000. He believed that almost the whole of the circulation of Manchester was supplied by the Bank of England. Now, he had never heard of a want of circulation in Manchester. The notes of the Bank of England were sufficient. They had bills of exchange there for carrying on their great transactions, but not for the purpose of supplying in any way a local circulation. In Liverpool the Bank of England supplied the circulation to the extent of £1,000,000. They might depend upon it that where a vacuum was felt, notes would be issued consistent with the principle which the maintenance of the standard of value required. They might depend upon it that the Bank of England would be willing to fill up the vacuum, but if the Bank of England were unwilling, then they had not to depend upon its good will, for they had always had it in their power to command the issue of Bank of England notes. Let it be supposed that there was a restriction to the amount of one ninth on the country issue, then the country banks and the joint-stock banks would have nothing else to do than to keep in London such an amount of available securities as would enable them to command and ensure Bank of England notes to supply the banks in the country. If the bank should refuse, which the bank would not—if it should refuse to issue paper to supply the void, then they did not depend upon the good will of the bank, they could by a small sacrifice have the void supplied by the exertions of the country bankers. All that was required from them was, not to submit to a restriction which would be an inconvenience. They could, by a deposit of securities, command a supply of paper, and with a smaller amount of difficulty than under the present regulations. The hon. gentleman asked him to define what he meant by money? and the hon. gentleman said that he had not, on a former occasion, defined it. Now, he had already stated that by money he meant either the coin of the realm or that species of paper credit named a promissory note, which, passing from hand to hand, and not requiring any personal guarantee beyond the credit of the issuer, supplies the place of money. He stated that he thought there was a clear distinction between a promissory note payable on demand, without any personal guarantee beyond the credit of the issuer, and any other form of public credit; and that he had a strong impression, that if they wanted a metal standard, with a circulating medium, supposed to take the place of gold, it could not be maintained upon any other basis than the actual and instant convertibility of the paper in circulation. With that system he thought they might leave without restriction and interference those other forms of paper credit, which are a proper superstructure on the basis of a metallic circulation and a paper circulation equivalent in value to gold. The hon. gentleman opposite said, that they ought not to interfere with the dealings between man and man; another hon. gentleman said, that though private banks had failed, there was no instance of misconduct on the part of joint-stock banks. That hon. gentleman, however, corrected himself by saying, that there were no proofs that in the ultimate winding-up of the affairs of these banks, the notes issued by them had not been paid to the holder. Why that might be true—it might be that by calling upon all the unfortunate shareholders in those banks, they had contrived, after the lapse of, perhaps, four or five years, to pay the holders of notes; but he did not think that the House would be of opinion that that was a satisfactory arrangement. The hon. gentleman, the member for Nottingham (Mr. Gisborne,) said, that he should vote for the proposition that there was not sufficient evidence to justify an interference with banks of issue—what evidence would the hon. gentleman have? He had already stated the dividends paid by a number of banks of issue: and he held in his hand a detailed account of the failure of different banks, among which he found the bank of Manchester, the Northern and Central bank, the Norfolk and Norwich joint-stock bank, the Commercial Bank of England, the

imperial bank, the Yorkshire agricultural and commercial banking company, the Isle of Wight joint-stock company, the Isle of Man Bank, the Leamington bank, and several others, which present such details of fraudulent practices, in many instances, as he had never before heard of. These instances clearly proved the policy of interference to the extent which he proposed, namely, requiring that the original prospectus should be deposited, that the names of partners should be given, and that there should be some provisions, imposing a responsibility on the directors who are to govern the establishments. If he wanted conclusive proofs of the policy of interfering with respect to the future regulations of joint-stock banks, the statement which he held in his hand would afford that proof. Here, for instance, is the Commercial Bank of England, with a nominal capital of £500,000, and a paid-up capital of £260,000, started in the year 1834, and which by the year 1840, had lost its entire capital, and about £30,000 or £40,000 in addition. In February 1840, only four months before it came to an end, the directors stated to the proprietors, that "they continued to stand firm in the confidence of the public," and that "the profits of the bank for the previous half-year had been larger than for any similar period since its establishment." This bank had advanced to one man £180,000, and one of the directors stated, that that man could not have got credit for £500 for two years in the town in which he lived from any other establishment. Although these banks acted in this reckless manner, these were all banks of issue, and their notes were freely circulated amongst all classes of society, from the wealthiest down to the very poorest. These parties were all subject to the consequences of these reckless proceedings, and yet the hon. gentleman said, that parliament should not interfere with these banks in any way. The hon. gentleman said, that these banks ought to be left to themselves, to do as they pleased, as was the case in Scotland. But he (Sir R. Peel) said, that when they found these banks establishing themselves in towns, and buying up the private banks, in order to make and extend their connection; when he saw that the notes issued by these banks were imposed upon all sorts of persons, many of whom had not the power to reject them, he considered that there was an amount of misery entailed upon society which called aloud for the interference of this House. He was not condemning all the joint-stock banks: on the contrary, he believed that many of them had conferred great benefits upon society, but it was by the legitimate application of their capital in advancing loans upon fair interest. But he said it was fair to the respectable establishments, conducted in this manner, to protect them from the injury which must be done to them, in common with the community, by the reckless proceedings of other establishments, which were not conducted with any regard to fair commercial principles. The hon. and learned member for Liskeard complained, in the course of his speech, that there had been some misapprehension in the returns of the number of failures of bankers since 1838, owing, as he said, to persons who had become bankrupts from other causes, but who happened to be shareholders in joint-stock banks, having been described in their flats as private bankers; and the hon. and learned gentleman referred to the highest authority, namely, the returns in the accountant's office in the court of bankruptcy, in confirmation of what he said. A statement of this kind had come to him (Sir R. Peel) before, and he immediately wrote to Mr. Montague, of that office, requesting him to make some inquiry into the subject. Mr. Montague wrote him a reply, which he would read to the House. Mr. Montague stated—"It is perfectly true that there had been some persons against whom flats had been taken out, who had been wrongly described as bankers, because they happened to be shareholders in country banks; but that the whole number of these cases was only six out of eighty-six."

So that there had been an error, as the hon. and learned gentleman had stated, but only to a very small amount. He had stated so fully on a former occasion the principal grounds upon which he supported the measure now proposed by her Majesty's government, that he would not, at this late hour of the night, detain the House by going any further over the same grounds. He trusted that the House would bear in mind, that during the last twenty years there had been four decisive proofs, at four distinct periods, that under the present system of currency, the principle of convertibility was endangered. The first was in 1825, when the Bank was

exposed to the greatest danger, brought on not altogether by the increase of country bank paper, but because there had been a great increase of the circulation at a time when, if the effects of the exchanges had been properly attended to, there ought to have been a reduction. In 1832, again there was a panic in the commercial world, and the bank was again endangered; and the circumstances under which the danger was then averted, if he were to enter into an explanation of them were of such a nature as only to confirm the principles which he was now contending for. In 1837 and 1839, there were fresh panics, attended by similar circumstances. The Manchester chamber of commerce declared that those distresses were consequent upon the fluctuations in the circulating medium of the country, and added, that from this cause there had been a loss upon five articles of manufacture, including woollen and hardware, of £40,000,000 of capital. The hon. member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) gave evidence before the committee of the enormous amount of loss of capital, and of moral and social misery which had been the result within a very short period of these fluctuations. The hon. member for Paisley referred to the year 1839, and asked what they could do if such a state of things were to come again, and the bullion in the bank were reduced from £9,000,000 to £2,000,000? Now, to this, he (Sir R. Peel) answered that he hoped that the Bank of England by acting on the principles of this measure, would avert the possibility of such an occurrence. In 1839, the Bank of England had to lean for assistance upon the Bank of France, tending to introduce confusion and embarrassment into the monetary affairs of this country. Therefore, in twenty years, proofs had from time to time been afforded that the present system was objectionable. It was the duty of the government to propose measures which they thought would be effectual for the amendment of that system; and yet taking care not to harm existing interests. They knew the difficulties they might have to contend with, if a combination of personal interests were permitted to prevail, but they had acted from a sense of public duty, and to all the great principles of the measure before the House they steadily adhered. If difficulties were thrown in its way the House must make itself responsible for them, and not the government, if the present measure failed and a period of increased issue again arrived. If that should happen, and again unwarranted speculation should ensue from that increased issue, ministers would have the satisfaction of reflecting that they had given the advice, and taken the course which they thought best calculated to avert the evil. They were not wild enough to suppose that this measure would prevent all undue speculation or ensure an invariable paper currency; but there was a species of speculation dependent on an undue issue of paper, which they hoped the measure would check. Speculation could not be prevented in a commercial community, but it might be aggravated by a species of paper credit within the power of parliament; and though ministers did not hope nor aim at checking legitimate speculation—though they admitted that they could not prevent illegitimate speculation, which was, perhaps, necessarily incident to mercantile enterprise, particularly in a country like this—still they asked parliament by assenting to this measure, not to aggravate evils it could not control, nor refuse to check those which came properly within its jurisdiction. Amendment negatived, and the bill read a second time.

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## THE SUGAR DUTIES.

JUNE 17, 1844.

On the Order of the Day being read for the House to resolve itself into committee on the Sugar Duties bill—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said—Sir, it is probable that the House expects from me some statement of the course which her Majesty's government propose to pursue under the circumstances in which they are placed by the vote of Friday night on the Sugar Duties, and assuming that I am right in respect to the wishes of the House as regards the statement I am prepared to make, probably the House will allow me to make it when the House shall have resolved itself into committee, and Mr. Greene is in the Chair.

House in committee.

On the 1st clause—("That the duties imposed by Acts 6 and 7, William IV., c. 26, and 3rd and 4th Victoria, c. 17, be continued till the 5th day of July, 1845)—and on the question that the words proposed by Mr. Miles be added, viz.:—"To leave out from the words 'continued until the' to the end of the clause, in order to add the words 10th day of November, 1844, and that from and after that date, until the 5th day of July, 1845, in lieu of the duties now payable thereon, there shall be charged the duties of customs following; that is to say," &c.—

Sir Robert Peel spoke as follows: Sir, I propose now, with the permission of the committee, to put it in possession of the views which her Majesty's government entertain with respect to the effect of the decision of Friday last on the subject of the Sugar Duties, and to state the course which it is their intention to pursue. Preliminary to that statement of their intention, the committee will, I am sure, permit me to refer in the first instance to the course her Majesty's government have pursued in the present year in relation to the financial policy of the country, and the considerations which have induced them to take that course, and to refer especially to the views they entertain upon the subject of those particular duties which are imposed upon foreign and colonial sugar. Sir, the opinions we entertain upon the subject of the sugar duties are those which we have entertained for several years—views which we expressed when we were opponents of her Majesty's government, which we have avowed since we have been intrusted with power, and which at the present time we still entertain and intend to act upon. We are of opinion that the ordinary considerations which determine matters of financial and commercial policy do not apply to the particular article of sugar. We find that with respect to the slave-trade this country has adopted a particular line of action, from which it may be inferred that this country considers the continuance of the slave-trade one of the greatest evils and curses by which humanity can be afflicted. We have treaties with foreign powers by which they are engaged to co-operate with us in the suppression of the slave-trade. Under ordinary circumstances we are ready to admit that the regulation not only of the internal affairs of countries, but of their commercial relations and interests generally, is within the province of the exclusive jurisdiction of each independent state. But we have engaged other powers by special treaties to co-operate with us for the suppression of the slave-trade, though the chief onus of the attempt to suppress it has fallen on this country. The legislature has thought itself justified by a general regard for the interests of humanity to aim at the suppression of the slave-trade and the extinction of slavery. In our own dominions the legislature has thought itself justified by considerations wholly apart from any interested motives—by considerations of general humanity—to call on the country to make a great sacrifice, not only for the suppression of the slave-trade, but for the abolition of slavery. The country voted without reluctance £20,000,000, for compensation for the abolition of slavery in the British dominions. At the present day a great annual expenditure is incurred on the coast of Africa and in other parts of the world by this country for the suppression of the slave-trade, that expenditure not being intended to benefit any part of our own dominions, but to put down a trade carried on for the supposed advantage of other parties with whose domestic institutions we have no right to interfere. In the course of the last session of parliament we passed an act prohibiting—or at least enforcing additional penalties against—the application of British capital to enterprises carried on in foreign countries through the medium of slavery, and encouraging the slave-trade. Both Houses of parliament concurred in that act, extending it to all the dominions of the Queen, and visiting with heavy penalties all those subjects of her Majesty who in Brazil or Cuba, or any other place, made use of their capital to encourage the slave-trade. We have, therefore, I conceive, by the whole tenor of our policy, given conclusive proof that this country is governed with respect to the slave-trade by a different principle from that which regulates every other kind of commercial transaction. When her Majesty's present government were in opposition in the year 1839, we supported those who were then in power in resisting the proposal then made by the present member for Dumfries, the effect of which, if it had met the sanction of the House, would have been to reduce the protective duty on foreign sugar, as compared with British colonial sugar, to the amount of 12s. That proposal was resisted by the noble lord, the member for London, and his colleagues in the government, upon grounds which I have before quoted; and

in quoting which I am sure the right hon. gentleman opposite, then President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Labouchere,) will do me the justice to say that I did not use them in the way of taunt, or as supposing that the declaration then made presumed that they placed any impediment in the way of a reconsideration of the Sugar duties at some other time. I do not refer to them again, except for the purpose of showing that a very high and respected authority did entertain opinions with respect to the slave trade, not very different from those we have subsequently adopted. The right hon. gentleman, whose opinion I am about to quote, did not profess to be permanently bound by his opinions; still he did state, as I now state, that in determining matters connected with the slave-trade we were bound to be regulated by other considerations than those which governed us in ordinary financial and commercial operations. In 1840, in opposing the motion of the present hon. member for Dumfries, the right hon. gentleman, the then President of the board of trade, who had been asked, why he consented to take slave grown tobacco and cotton if he refused to take slave-grown sugar, said—"He was not prepared to say that upon this subject the course of legislation in England had been consistent; but he thought that a broad distinction was to be drawn between the importation of sugar and the importation of tobacco and cotton. It was to be borne in mind, that the two latter commodities did not enter into competition with any similar articles raised by free labour in our own colonies."

The right hon. gentleman also stated, that a great experiment had then been recently made in the West Indies, and referred also to some extraordinary and temporary causes of depression in the colonies; but stated that he was unwilling to interfere with the success of the measure for the extinction of slavery in our British colonial possessions, by opening the floodgates to a supply of foreign sugar, which would inundate the British market, and materially interfere with the prospect of a successful termination of that experiment. Whether the views we still entertain on this subject be well founded or not, at least they are consistent views—views which we did entertain, and which we avowed and acted on when we were opposed to the right hon. gentleman. They appeared to receive a sanction also from the very high authority of a gentleman whose name I have never mentioned without accompanying it with professions of respect for his opinions on all matters of finance—I mean Mr. Deacon Hume. That gentleman was the advocate of the removal of the restrictions on the trade in corn, and he was the decided opponent of the protective system; he was the authority of all others who has given the most express and positive opinions, deriving great weight from his official situation and connection with the government, in favour of unrestricted commerce and the abolition of protection. Mr. Hume himself did except this article of sugar and the slave trade from the ordinary principles which should govern the commercial regulations. He said—"I cannot conceive; after our having thirty years ago abolished the slave-trade, and after having abolished slavery itself, that any question of free trade can arise as regards Cuba—with her abundance of rich soil, not only having the advantage of a population of slaves, but notoriously importing the enormous amount of 40,000 to 50,000 slaves annually, having in fact both the slave-trade and slavery—when the law has deprived the planter of the means of raising his produce. I consider the question as altogether taken out of the category of free trade."

Those were the opinions of Mr. Deacon Hume, delivered so recently as the year 1840, at a time when he was the advocate of the abolition of all restrictions. Her Majesty's government entertain the same opinions; they think, that to expose the British planter, who has neither the advantage—if it be an advantage of slavery—nor still less of the slave trade, to the necessity of competing with Brazil and Cuba, spots the most favoured by nature for the production of sugar—the parts of the world, containing probably the most of rich and virgin soil, and with a climate peculiarly adapted to the production of sugar:—we entertain Mr. Hume's opinion—that if you prohibit the slave-trade and abolish slavery, it does require the most mature consideration before you subject the British planter to competition with countries possessed of such facilities for increased production. We have the most conclusive proofs that our endeavours to extirpate the slave-trade in Cuba and Brazil have been ineffectual; that the public mind of those countries is not opposed to the continuance of that system, but that it exists to a frightful extent;

and we still entertain the opinion that to admit the sugar of those countries on the same terms that we admit the sugar of Manilla, and that we shall admit that of China, would be unjust to the British planter. Remember too in considering this question that it was but comparatively recent that the House, by an unanimous resolution, addressed the Crown to enforce the regulations as to slavery and the slave-trade; that the Crown has acted on that address so far as to make increased pecuniary exertion to suppress the slave-trade, and that the feeling manifested on that occasion was such as to leave no doubt that, in the opinion of the House of Commons, considerations of expense were subordinate to the great object of suppressing the slave-trade, we certainly think that the opening the British market to the sugar of Brazil and Cuba would give an increased stimulus to the slave-trade as carried on in those countries and on the coast of Africa, aggravating the *status* of slavery, and that, therefore, after such public professions, it would be inconsistent so to open our markets to that slave-grown sugar. We are not insensible to those considerations—at least we attach due weight to them—urged by the opponents of protection, that the admission of sugar the growth of free labour would give, though not a direct, yet an indirect encouragement, to a certain extent, to the slave-grown sugar of Brazil and Cuba. That, certainly, may be the result at first; but I cannot help entertaining the opinion that, if you will encourage the protection of sugar the growth of free labour in such countries as Manilla and Java, and perhaps in China, you will by that give a permanent encouragement to the production of free-grown sugar—that, though there may in the mean time be a temporary increase of the produce of Brazil and Cuba, yet that the encouragement you will give will ultimately tend to prove that free-grown sugar can compete favourably with slave-grown sugar, and that you will thus be striking a blow, indirectly but effectually, at the slave-trade, and by those means tend to ameliorate the condition of the slaves themselves. Sir, these are the general grounds on which we still entertain the opinion that though it may be safe with respect to the West India interests to permit a limited and qualified competition of sugar the produce of free-labour, yet that it will be dangerous to those interests to admit, as the noble lord proposed at a differential duty of 10s., only the sugar of Brazil and Cuba, and that it would be inconsistent with the course this country has taken, and the declarations we have made, on the subject of slavery and the slave trade. I do not wish to provoke any controversy, but merely to state the grounds on which her Majesty's government have formed their conclusions, and on which they are prepared to act. With these opinions, the question upon which we had to decide at the commencement of the present year was this—what course shall we pursue with respect to the admission of foreign sugar? Of course I do not ask hon. gentlemen to acquiesce in my views, and to make a distinction between slave-labour sugar and free-labour sugar. I only ask them to allow me to assume, for the sake of argument, that my opinions are correct in supposing that there is to be a distinction made. Entertaining those opinions, then, what course ought we, consistently with our public duty, to pursue with respect to the admission of foreign sugar? As bearing on the question, an event of considerable importance is to occur this year. On the 10th of November, 1844, the existing treaty with Brazil will expire. Previously to that day it is most difficult for a government, entertaining the opinions we do to deal at all with the question of sugar, because Brazil is entitled, by the engagements of the existing treaty, to have her produce received in the markets of this country on the footing of the most favoured nations. There is no qualification—it is an equivalent condition—the engagement is express and absolute. The produce of Brazil must, with respect to duty, be admitted on the same footing as the produce of Manilla or of Java; but on the 10th of November in this year, that state of things will cease. We therefore considered, at the commencement of this year, what course it would be our duty to take. It has been said that it would have been more advisable, if instead of postponing the consideration of that great question—which must be considered previously to the expiration of the Income-tax—we had declared our general financial and commercial views this session; and that, supposing they had led to the conclusion that there ought to be a continuance of the Income-tax, accompanied by further modifications of the tariff, and greater reductions in the import duties on foreign articles, it would better have been made in the present year than have deferred

any proposal we might have to make until the next. Now, I will state to the House the reasons which induced us to think it our duty to postpone the consideration of the general financial condition of the country, as connected and interwoven with the renewal of the Income-tax, until next year. We thought it most desirable, that the House, before coming to a decision on so important a question as the renewal of the Income-tax, and many other questions necessarily depending upon it, should be in possession of the greatest and fullest experience as to the effect of those alterations in the customs duties which were made in 1842, when the Income-tax was proposed. Many of those duties did not take effect until within a rather recent period. But, if we are to decide that great and important question of the renewal of the Income-tax, it would be most advantageous to us to know the result of the past reductions of the customs duties. In the case of the timber duties, the experience of their effect is very deficient, because, in the case of timber, as to some of the most important articles in respect of which reductions were made, the whole alteration did not take effect till the month of October last; therefore, we have now only a very limited period from which to determine the effect of the reductions in the timber duties. There has also been, for some months past, decided indications of an increased demand for industry, and of greater employment among the manufacturing and working classes generally, that cannot but be considered as an evidence of increasing and returning prosperity as far as the trade and manufactures of the country are concerned. I am sure I am expressing the earnest wish of this House that these indications may be significant of permanent improvement. At the same time we have on former occasions been deceived by delusive indications of returning prosperity, and there are some who still think that these indications cannot be relied on. But this, in my opinion, constitutes a decisive reason why, before reviewing the whole of our commercial policy, and why, before taking into our consideration the renewal or the abandonment of the Income-tax, or whatever other financial course we might think advisable, sufficient time should elapse in order that we might be enabled to judge of the effect of the alterations then made. But there was another and a still more conclusive reason for postponing until next year the consideration of the Income-tax. We had no alternative in the present year, as we had reason to believe at the commencement of the session, but to draw the attention of the House to two other great financial questions, which probably would press in the course of the present session for immediate discussion. The one was the reduction of the interest on the three-and-a-half per cent. stock—an operation, from the amount of that stock, by far the greatest that has been undertaken in modern times, and the failure of which would have been to every interest most unfortunate. We had also no alternative but to bring forward a proposal of the greatest importance, which I have had, as the organ of government, the honour of submitting to this House, namely, the measure for the renewal of the bank charter, the regulation of joint-stock banks, and of the system of paper circulation in this country. We foresaw at the commencement of the session that there was every prospect that both these measures would undergo consideration. Seeing also the mass of legislation, which I freely admit was left undisposed of at the end of last session, and which pressed for decision in the course of the present,—the necessity of proposing the reduction of the interest of the three-and-a-half per cent. stock, and the other necessity of proposing a measure for the regulation of the bank charter, induced us to think that it was not desirable to call the attention of the House to another measure of the greatest financial and commercial importance, namely, the question of the renewal or discontinuance of the Income-tax. There was a third reason also for postponing the measure till next year, which, in our opinion was equally conclusive. How were we to deal with the question of the admission of foreign sugar? To propose the continuance of the Income-tax, and make no proposal on the subject of sugar, would probably not have conciliated the approval of the House of Commons. I doubt whether the House would not almost have considered a proposal respecting the sugar duties a necessary condition of the renewal of the Income-tax. It was impossible for us, pending the treaty with Brazil, to make that proposal. Supposing in the month of March we had brought on the question of the Income-tax and the sugar duties, and proposed in that month any considerable reduction of the duties on sugar, Brazil would have been entitled until November, 1844, to share



in all the advantages of that reduction, and would have had a positive claim to admit her sugar into the market of this country with the advantage of whatever reduction would have been made. Now, from the combined operation of these three reasons, I think any gentleman who permits me to assume that we are right in making a distinction between free-labour sugar and slave-labour sugar, will admit that we had no alternative but to postpone the consideration of any very extensive measure in respect to the sugar duties until our discretion was unfettered, so far as Brazil was concerned, by the termination of the treaty. We therefore did resolve deliberately not to ask the House to pronounce an opinion in the course of the present session with respect to the continuance of the Income-tax. At the same time, we felt it to be our duty to make a proposition to the House on the subject of the sugar duties. We saw indications of a rising price. The price of sugar at the commencement of the spring was about 2s. higher per cwt. than the average of the last two years. There were reasons to apprehend that there might be a deficient supply. In the month of November, 1844, the period would arrive when we should be at liberty to deal with the question of free-labour sugar. The only monopoly that remains almost is that of sugar. ["Corn, Corn."] I do not wish to provoke discussion. I am making a statement of a very important kind, and I wish studiously to avoid saying anything which is capable of contradiction in the way of argument, still less that can provoke angry controversy. But, certainly, of the great articles of consumption in this country, the only one in respect of which an unqualified monopoly exists is sugar. On the article of foreign sugar there is a duty of three guineas, which operates as an exclusion of that produce from our market. We thought, therefore, it was our duty to avail ourselves of the earliest opportunity of proposing a measure we thought might be passed without detriment to the interest of the West-India Colonies, with advantage to the community at large, and without injury to the revenue; namely, to break down the monopoly as far as this—to admit sugar the produce of the same description of labour which the West-Indians could command, namely, free-labour sugar, to competition with West-India sugar; and we resolved to propose that, after the 10th of November next, the whole extent of the protecting duty between Colonial sugar and free-labour sugar should not exceed 10s. We thought that if at this period of the year, when there is an increased demand for sugar, there should be a deficient supply—if the expectations of an abundant supply from our own colonies should be disappointed—if the price should suddenly rise, there being an increased demand for the commodity, on account of increasing industry in the manufacturing districts—we did think that the West-India interest would not be benefited by such a rise in price, and that it would be for their advantage, as well as that of the consumer, to take a security at least against any rapid and considerable increase in price. We, therefore, resolved not to diminish the duty on sugar the produce of our own colonies, but, the very earliest moment at which we could deal with free-labour sugar, without giving any corresponding right of admission to slave-grown sugar—to permit this qualified competition. We had another reason for dealing with this question in the present year. We wished the producers of free-labour sugar to know what were the opinions and intentions of parliament. We wished them to be assured whether parliament intended to confine the competition to free-labour sugar, and whether parliament would sanction government in establishing a distinction between free-labour and slave-grown sugar. It became most important to our views that early notice should be given that in China, in Manilla, in Java, the present producers of sugar, and the capitalist, inclined to speculate in the increased production of sugar, should know what were the intentions of the British government, in order that at any future period there might be the means of competition with sugar the produce of our own colonies; and the desire, therefore, to take a security against increased price, and the desire that early notice should be given in the countries which were to be the competing countries with colonial sugar, induced us to resolve not to postpone beyond November 9th, 1844, the admission of that description of foreign sugar into our own market. I am bound to say that, notwithstanding the discussions which have taken place, we adhere to our opinions. We believe the course we have proposed to be more safe for the revenue, and advantageous for the consumer here, and, so far from being detrimental to the West-Indian interest

likely to promote the enlarged and permanent advantage of the West-Indian body. In submitting that measure, however, to the consideration of the House we were met, in the first instance, by the amendment of the noble lord (J. Russell), who proposed that slave-labour sugar should be admitted into competition with colonial sugar upon the same terms on which free-labour sugar should be admitted. The noble lord, assuming our distinction, proposed that a duty of 34*s.* should be indiscriminately applied to sugar, the produce of any country, without reference to the source whence it was derived, or the kind of labour by which it was produced. The noble lord took a division on that point, and the proposal of the government in that respect was affirmed by a considerable majority. On a subsequent stage of the proceedings we were, however, met with a counter-proposal on the part of the West-India body. It was proposed by an hon. friend of mine—the hon. member for Bristol (Mr. Miles)—that there should be a departure from the scheme of the government,—that instead of the relative amounts of sugar being as we proposed (24*s.* and 34*s.* from November next), my hon. friend proposed, and the House implied an opinion, I presume, that his scheme was preferable to ours [“No, no.”]—well, an opinion adverse to our proposal—my hon. friend proposed, that instead of the relative duties being 24*s.* and 34*s.* the relative duties should be 20*s.* and 30*s.*: that there should be from the 10th of November next, a reduction of duty on British sugar to 20*s.*, and that from the same day there should be a discriminating duty as respects certain descriptions of sugar called white clayed sugar, or sugar equivalent to white clayed sugar, to the extent of 14*s.* His proposal limited the protecting duty on sugar of all descriptions to 10*s.*, and with respect to a particular description of sugar, that there should be a protecting duty of 14*s.* Her Majesty's government have, as was their duty, considered the proposal of my hon. friend. Acting, I trust, not under the influence of temper or disappointment at being in a minority, they have maturely considered the proposal which I still must think, if the government were inclined to adopt it, would probably meet with the sanction of the House, because I cannot help thinking there must have been some understanding, that hon. gentlemen whom I see opposite were, many of them at least, to support the proposal of my hon. friend. [“No, no.”] I don't say that the vote given the other night at all involved any obligation to support it, but certainly I inferred that there was an understanding that the proposal of my hon. friend was to receive support from the other side of the House, as opposed to the proposal of the government. [Mr. Roebuck: “No.”] The hon. and learned gentleman is under no such objection, having expressed his opposition to it. I do not say that the other side of the House, generally, is under the least obligation to support it; but I certainly do entertain the opinion that many gentlemen on that side of the House were prepared to support the motion of my hon. friend as contradistinguished from the proposal of the government. I do not say that the vote itself binds any gentleman, but certainly it gave reason to suppose that there was, on the part of many, a disposition to support the proposition of my hon. friend, as opposed to the motion of the government. I will now, Sir, assign the reasons why her Majesty's government, after mature consideration, notwithstanding the vote come to the other night, retain their original opinions, and are not prepared to adopt the motion of my hon. friend. They cannot acquiesce in that motion as a mode of escaping from the difficulties in which they may be placed, because, on additional and more mature consideration in the interval, they disapprove of that proposition, and they think their own original proposition preferable for every interest in this country. My hon. friend proposes that there shall be from the 10th of November next a prospective reduction of duty. We think prospective reductions of duty, to take effect from a certain defined period, are objectionable in principle. We think that the consumer will derive little advantage from that reduction of duty, that the revenue will be subjected to loss, and that the West-India interest will not be the party that will benefit by the increase of price which will take place in the meantime. We think it not impossible, if the market is to be supplied until the 10th of November at the present rate of duty, with a certainty that on the 10th of November there will be a diminished rate of duty—at this period of the year, which is a very critical one as respects the Sugar Duties (the period of the year when there is an increased demand for sugar on account of the prevailing habit of preserving fruits and the making of home-made wine)—we think that at this

particular period there will be an observable increased demand and an increased price, on account of the unwillingness of retailers of sugar to take out supplies in the interval between the present day and the month of November, when there will be a known reduction of duty to a certain prescribed and definite amount. We think the West-India interest will not benefit by that increased price, but that those grocers and retailers who may happen to have ample supplies of sugar will refuse to increase their stock, but will increase their demand on the public. In the course of this day I have looked at the effect that was produced by our proposal for the reduction of the timber duties from a certain date. At the instance of those who had stocks in hand, in conformity with what appeared to be the general concurrence of the House, in order to give the opportunity of disposing of the stock in hand, we altered our original plan, in 1842, in respect to the timber duties, and provided that in the month of October, 1842, there should be certain known reductions of the duties on Baltic timber. The measure of reduction was to receive its completion, and the duties, which were to continue permanent, were to take effect from the 5th of October, 1843. I have attempted to ascertain what was the effect, on the timber duties, the demand for timber, and what was the effect on the revenue by the prospective reduction of the duty on timber; and for that purpose I compared the amount of duty received in the quarters ending the 10th of October, 1841, and the 5th of January, 1842, with the produce of the two corresponding quarters—the 10th of October, 1843, and the 5th of January, 1844. I omit 1842, because the duties then were in a state of change. I think the fairest period for comparison is between 1841 and 1843, there being in 1841 no notice of a reduction in the timber duties. In the quarter ending the 10th of October, 1841, the total amount of timber duty received by the Exchequer was £646,000, and in the quarter ending on the 5th of January, 1842, the following quarter, the total amount of timber duty was £292,000. The proportion, therefore, of the timber duty received in the one quarter to the other was, taking the centesimal form of expression, as 100 to 45; showing that the quarter ending the 10th of October was that in which the great demand was made for foreign timber. In October, 1843, the new duty was to take effect, and the total amount received in the October quarter was only £158,000, instead of £646,000; but in the following quarter, from the 5th of January, 1844, the amount of duty paid, when the duties were settled and it was known what amount of duty was to be paid, when there was no withholding of supply in order to pay a diminished duty, the receipts of the Exchequer were £268,000, as compared with £158,000, that is to say, the proportion which had been in 1841, 100 to 45, was changed in the two quarters when the remission of duty was expected, and after it had taken place, from 100 to 45 to 100 to 169—showing what the effect was of a prospective reduction of duty on any article. There was diminished demand for the article—diminished payments into the exchequer—parties waiting till they could take advantage of the diminished duty, and then, having got the diminished duty, the supply was taken out in the ordinary way. Now the amount of reduction in the timber duty made by the tariff was about one-sixth of the previously existing duty; it very nearly corresponds with the proportionate amount of reduction proposed by my hon. friend. He proposes to make a reduction, on the 10th of November next, of about one-sixth of the present duty. My opinion is, that although I am willing to admit that the stocks of timber are much larger than the stocks of sugar, yet still I think it highly probable that the same results will follow—that there will be a limitation of supply in the sugar market for the five months that will elapse before the 10th of November next, that there will be increased price, and that that increased price will not go into the pocket of the West-India proprietor, the object of your sympathy—that there will be increased loss to the revenue, loss to the consumer, and no benefit, except to the retailer, who has no particular claim on your protection. I therefore retain my opinion that this prospective reduction of duty, to take effect from November next, is unwise. I know it is said that we ourselves encourage an expectation that at no distant period the sugar duties may be reconsidered. I apprehend that any such expectation as this, contingent on the continuance of the Income-tax, would produce a very different effect on the market from the notoriety that upon a certain day, the 10th of November next, an amount of duty named also is to apply to a given article. If any evil arises from the vague expectation that the sugar duty may possibly,

dependent on certain contingencies, be reviewed, notwithstanding the declamations and sarcasms of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, the present government will not be the only one that is chargeable with having made prospective changes of duties. I have heard the right hon. gentleman opposite, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, more than once, when the late government were charged with taking the West Indian interests by surprise, say, that the late Lord Sydenham, in 1839, gave them notice that they must expect a revision of the sugar duties at a very early period; and that was his vindication for proposing in 1841 the measure that he had even proposed the year preceding, still falling back upon the prior motion of Lord Sydenham's. Thus the former government cannot be said to have always accompanied the word with the blow, for they told the West Indians long beforehand to prepare for the blow, as they felt themselves under the necessity of making a general statement that parties must be prepared for a reduction of the sugar duties. But we have said nothing more than that which must be notorious—that the Income-tax will expire in the course of next year, and that when it does expire the question of its renewal or discontinuance must be accompanied by the consideration of the sugar duties. Therefore, I must contend that the effect of a prospective reduction to a definite amount at a declared period would be totally different, in respect to the dealings in the commodity affected, from vague, general declarations that next year the subject must be reconsidered. But, Sir, upon another ground that government cannot acquiesce in the proposition of the hon. gentleman. We cannot agree to a proposal that there shall be a discriminating duty of 14s. in favour of certain species of colonial sugar. I will not now enter into the question whether or not there should be a classification of sugar according to certain processes of manufacture; all I contend for is this—that if this classification be desirable it ought to be universal in its application—that in justice to the consumer, if you classify sugar the produce of foreign countries, you should classify sugar the produce of our colonies. I am of that opinion, because there is as great a variation in the quality of sugar the produce of your own colonies as there is in the quality of sugar the produce of foreign countries; and there is as much of injustice in subjecting the coarser description of sugar to a competition with sugar of the highest qualities, each being the produce of our own colonies, at an equal rate of duty, as there is in subjecting your own sugar to competition at an equal rate of duty with sugar the produce of foreign countries. The inferior classes of colonial will compete with the inferior of other countries. The superior classes of the colonial will enter into competition with the superior classes of foreign countries. I cannot, therefore, admit the justice of making the classification in the case of foreign sugar unless you are prepared to make it equally in the case of our own sugar. And, therefore (if we ever came to that part of the proposal of my hon. friend,) the government retain their original opinion; and cannot consent to seek an escape from their present difficulties by undertaking to give an increased protection to the West Indian interests. My opinions, Sir, upon the effect of sugar duties are worth very little; they can only be formed upon general reasoning. The effect, for instance, of a prospective reduction of duty can be only estimated by watching the effect of such a measure respecting other commodities. But I have received by post this morning from a high practical authority a strong confirmation of the views I have expressed on this subject—that there is danger in a prospective reduction of duty, and that there is no sufficient ground for a discriminating duty in favour of the "white clayed sugar" of our colonies. From this letter I will read some extracts:—"Having been extensively engaged in the sugar trade for the last twenty years, and latterly having 'turned over' nearly £1,000,000 per annum, I venture to submit an opinion. Of course I am, in common with all other consumers and dealers, anxious to see the duties on all foreign, and more particularly colonial sugar, reduced as low as possible; but I am quite certain, if the proposition of the hon. member for Bristol be carried as it stands, it will be most injurious to all parties interested, as well as to the revenue; for no one will deal in an article that is certain to be cheaper in November. I would likewise strongly advise you to place the same extra duty of 4s. on the better qualities of colonial sugar which the hon. gentleman proposes to put on white clayed free-labour sugar, as it is well known that extensive refineries have been recently erected near Calcutta and other places, for the purpose of making a fine sugar very nearly equal

to the refined, but just so much under it as to be admitted at the other rate of duty. And this has so far already superseded the use of the refined, or lump sugar, that in Scotland none other hardly is bought. And this fine crystallized sugar is made in Demerara, and now sells at 70s., while the brown Muscovado sells, at 56s. duty paid."

Now, observe the brown Muscovado selling at 56s. is exposed to competition with sugar of our own colonies, worth 70s., at exactly the same rate of duty. The produce of those processes of manufacture, the result of the application of capital, are brought into our market in competition with the ordinary produce of the West Indian colonists at the same rate of duty. You propose to make no distinction there. But you do propose the discrimination in respect to foreign, which you do not admit as to your own sugar. Why, if this very fine sugar, worth 70s., is admitted at the same rate of duty as that worth only 56s., should not the same rule be adopted in the case of the sugar of Java and Manilla? Why should not the finer description of sugars the produce of Java and Manilla compete with our fine sugars at a 10s. discriminating duty, in the same way as the coarser kind of our sugar, of the value of 56s., comes into competition with the foreign article? These are the grounds on which her Majesty's government do not think it would be just to vote for the discriminating duty in favour of clayed sugar proposed in the resolution of my hon. friend, which gives a protecting duty of 14s. We cannot, therefore, assent, to the proposal of my hon. friend, because we entertain, after reconsideration, a decided preference in favour of our own plan. We do not think the measure which he proposes is one which ought to receive the assent of the House, and it is not, therefore, in our power to vote for it on its merits. Sir, I do not hesitate to admit that, differing as we do from my hon. friend on the merits of his proposition, there are also political grounds which make it impossible for me, on the part of the government, to undertake the responsibility of supporting him. It was said that no very material difference existed between the proposal of her Majesty's government and that of my hon. friend; that in respect to one class of sugar he proposed the same amount of protecting duty, and that, therefore, we might without difficulty adopt the amendment of my hon. friend. If it be a matter of unimportance we are disinclined to adopt it. It was carried by a combination of those who generally support us with those who are our political opponents. If the measure, I repeat, be an unimportant one, in proportion to its unimportance, is it significant of a want of confidence in our administration? ["No, no."] If you can effect a great public object, that is a reason for proposing an alteration in the plan of the government; but if you cannot effect any important object,—if there be no great difference in the value of the two propositions, then I say the concurrence between our political opponents and our political friends has a bearing on our position as the executive government of this empire. It does in our opinion require us to resist it by all the means in our power, and if acquiesced in by us, it would be an encouragement of similar combinations. I do not believe, Sir—I cannot believe, that the concurrence in that vote was a casual occurrence, arising out of our debate on the subject. I may be wrong, but my impression is, that it was a preconcerted arrangement between some of those who oppose and some of those who support us. When my hon. friend—of course a word from him would be sufficient to destroy this delusion in my mind, if delusion it be, but I will tell him why I believe the vote was the result of a concert between some of those who support and some of those who oppose us,—I am not complaining. [Laughter.] No, but I have a right to observe upon such a combination. I do not deny the right of hon. gentlemen, if they think fit, to enter into such combination. I do not condescend to deprecate such a proceeding; but I think I have a right to consider what bearing the result has upon the position of the government, when I am determining whether I will acquiesce in an unimportant proposition, as an amendment to a plan of the government, carried by a combination such as I have alluded to. I am not, I repeat, denying the right of the two parties so to combine. Into that I enter not. But I claim for myself the right—and I mean to exercise it!—the right of determining what effect, upon my position as a minister of the Crown, my acquiescence in the arrangement proposed would produce. Sir, when my hon. friend originally gave notice of his amendment, it was to this effect—that he should propose a reduction of duty on British colonial sugar,

to the amount of 20s. My hon. friend indicated no intention at that time, to reduce the duty on foreign sugar from 34s. to 30s.; consequently, according to the original notice of my hon. friend, the amount of protection for all sugar was 14s. The noble lord, the member for the city of London, had then made a motion which proposed only a protecting duty of 10s. on all foreign sugars—namely, 24s. and 34s.; and my hon. friend, it afterwards appeared, amended his proposition, and took as the amount of protecting duty for all sugars not 14s. but 10s. That was the proposal made by my hon. friend. My hon. friend said, that after he had made his proposal, the West-India body, being somewhat alarmed by my hon. friend indicating the amount of protection which he thought sufficient, had quarrelled with him for not taking a higher amount of protection than 10s.; and, fearing that the expression of the opinion of the West-India body, as represented by my hon. friend, might be hereafter quoted against them, my hon. friend was induced to alter his plan, alleging that the forms of the House prevented him from establishing a greater distinction in the discriminating duty. Sir, my hon. friend is quite wrong on that point, because nothing could have been more easy for my hon. friend—if it had suited his views and those of all his supporters—than to have adhered to his original proposition of establishing a duty of 14s., which he could have done in perfect conformity with the orders of the House, and with no probability of being checked by your vigilance, he might have contrived so to have shaped his motion, that he might have established his protection to the amount of 14s., and thus avoided the risk of embarrassment of which he professed such apprehension. But my hon. friend being invited to state whether he could make any relaxation in that part of his proposal which referred to the duty on “white clayed” sugar, I think intimated that he was not prepared to exercise any discretion on the subject, and that he was determined to adhere to the diminished duty of 10s. on the one hand, and the increased protection of 14s. on the other. Sir, I am not inclined, I hope, to be mortified, or to complain of the language used in the course of debate with respect to us, who, as ministers, have to endure with silence, if not with patience, the harshest expressions. I cannot, however, altogether forget the terms in which my hon. friends the mover and seconder of the amendment recommended it to the consideration of the House. Without feeling the slightest ill temper, I am only remarking on the bearing which the proceedings have upon the position of the government. My hon. friend said we had indicated an intention to “sacrifice” the colonial interests; and the first proof he adduced of this was our abolition of the duty on the importation of wool, by which, he said, though it did not interfere with the home produce, we had struck a blow at the Australian interests. I have the satisfaction of stating to my hon. friend, that since the abolition of the duty on foreign wool, there has been a considerable sale of Australian wool, which took place, I think, three or four days since; and I have been assured by an hon. gentleman, who sits on that (the opposition) side of the House, that there never was a brisker sale of Australian wool; and that the rise in the price of such wool, since the reduction of the duty on foreign wool, as compared with the price of Australian wool before the reduction, was greater within the same period than had almost ever been known. So that my hon. friend must give up his argument as to the blow inflicted on our Australian colonies. Then my hon. friend said, we had now “thrown off the mask,” naturally attempting to induce the agriculturists to co-operate with him in revising the sugar duties. Then, my hon. friend made a distinct appeal to the noble lord opposite, declaring he was prepared to combine with him for the purpose of rescuing the colonists from the evils with which they were threatened by her Majesty’s government—making the appeal to the noble lord with the knowledge that the noble lord was prepared to abolish all discriminations in duty between foreign sugar and colonial. Again the hon. member for Inverness improved upon my hon. friend, declaring our course “vacillating and tortuous,” and that the West-Indian interests “could have no confidence in our intentions.” He, also, made an appeal to the hon. gentlemen opposite for the support which they apparently willingly conceded. But, further, and which is more important, and there are occasions on which the most perfect frankness should be shown—the hon. members did, I think, intimate that in their opinion the distinction should no longer be made between free and slave-grown foreign sugar. Sir, these are occasions on which one must speak with perfect unreserve. What are the reasons which induce me—be the

consequences what they may—to decline acquiescing in the proposal of my hon. friend? My hon. friend did, I think, say, that certificates of origin would be no security against fraud. If my hon. friend was justified in the observations which he made, I think there would be for him scarcely any alternative but the admission of all foreign sugar at an equal rate of duty, or the maintenance intact of the present monopoly. My hon. friend is of opinion, and regards this as a radical defect in our plan, that certificates of origin offer no security against fraud. If that be so I cannot see how he escapes the conclusion that all foreign sugars ought to be admitted indiscriminately, or that, in order to avert that calamity, we ought to maintain the existing law. The hon. member who seconded my hon. friend I think expressed himself in still more decisive terms as to the impolicy of maintaining a distinction between free-labour and slave-grown sugar. My hon. friend I understand to give an opinion that he would prefer the free admission of all sugars, accompanied, perhaps, with an increased amount of protection to the admission of free-labour sugar, as the amount of protection proposed by her Majesty's government. To exemplify what I mean, I understand my hon. friend to prefer a protective duty, the amount I will assume only for the purpose of exemplification—that my hon. friend is of opinion that a protecting duty of 15s. to be applied to all sugars would be preferable to the 10s. duty, proposed by the government. In the course of the speeches of the two hon. members, there appears a material difference of opinion, with regard to principle, between these two hon. gentlemen and those of whom they are the organs and the government, and the government are determined that they would not be authorised in carrying such intentions into effect. That expression of opinion is an additional reason with her Majesty's government for surmising that in point of principle, as far as slave-grown sugar is concerned, there is a difference of opinion, and on that account they feel increased objection to adopt the proposition of my hon. friend. Under these circumstances the course which her Majesty's government propose to pursue is this:—The noble lord opposite (Viscount Howick) towards the close of the debate the other night invited the hon. gentleman to join with him in excluding certain words, stating, and stating very truly, that the adoption of his suggestion would not bind any one to support the particular proposal of the hon. gentleman. That if this motion were successful, those who had supported it might make any proposal they should think fit as an amendment to the proposal of my hon. friend. I am sure the noble lord would not wish to exclude her Majesty's government from the exercise of the same privilege. The noble lord made his appeal to the House with his usual tact, and it was successful. He pointed out what would be the effect of the amendment, and he said that voting for it did not bind any hon. member to the proposition of the hon. member for Bristol, but that he was perfectly at liberty to move any other amendment he thought proper. For the purpose of giving the House an opportunity of reconsidering the subject, and of determining whether any weight attaches to the reasons I have stated to the House to-night, it is the intention of the government not to accede to the proposition of my hon. friend. When the motion is made—if my hon. friend does make it, that 20s. shall be inserted as the amount of duty to take effect from the 10th of November, 1844,—I propose on that occasion to move, and to take the sense of the House on it, that 24s. be inserted; that is to say, there shall be no reduction of the duty on British colonial sugar. I shall not propose that motion merely because we believe it to be preferable to the other, but because that in carrying a measure this year on the subject of the sugar duties, it is important as indicative of your intentions next year, that the producers of sugar in countries to the eastward of the Cape, should know what will be their fate in the course of the next session with respect to the sugar duties. We do not intend to propose at any time the admission of slave-labour sugar on the same footing on which we propose to admit sugar the produce of free-labour. It may be said, "Why, then, don't you abandon your measure altogether, and propose a continuance of the existing duties until the usual period, or ending some period in the course of the next session?" I will state to the House why we do not adopt that course. Suppose we did adopt that alternative,—in the course of the next session, if we were intrusted with the government, it might be our duty to make a proposal on the subject of the sugar duties. That proposal would, of course, involve a reduction of the duties on free-labour sugar. It might involve a considerable reduction of the duty

on British colonial, and a corresponding reduction of the duty upon sugar, the produce of free-labour. But, observe, if no previous notice had been given, and if you still required certificates of origin as the condition for the admission of free-labour sugar—observe the condition in which we are placed, in approaching the consideration of the sugar duties without previous notice, or without any steps having been taken by parliament. [Interruption, a general cry of "Order."] I am aware that the question is a very complicated and uninteresting one; but it is so much the more necessary that the House should grant me its kind attention, in order that they should comprehend the motives by which we have been actuated. If we had merely continued the existing sugar duties till next year, and that next year we proposed to deal extensively with the general question of sugar, in what position should we be? The noble lord would certainly be relieved from any difficulty; for he would admit sugar from all countries, and his proposition would at once take effect. But we, in our opinion of the policy and justice of discriminating between the two classes of free-grown and slave-labour sugar, should have to choose between two alternatives, either immediately to reduce the duty on British colonial to a considerable extent—and observe, in that case, what we should do—we should establish a monopoly in the British market for British colonial sugar for several months, because we should have to wait for a certificate of origin before we could admit foreign sugar. Let us assume, that in the course of a certain time (and I merely put the matter hypothetically), that we proposed a reduction of the duty on British plantation sugar to the amount of 16s., unless we could open some sources of competing supply, the British colonial producer would have a monopoly in the British market, with that reduced amount of duty, and in fact he might fix any sum he pleased. If, on the other hand, we took up the course which would ensure us a competing supply of sugar, and that we made the reduction prospective in its effect, say, at the end of eight or nine months, the consequence would be, that the arrangement would be open to all the objections of the motion of my hon. friend; it would be fixing a definite day for the duty to take effect, and the more we reduce the amount, the more we diminish the market and prevent a regular supply. On that ground I am not prepared to adopt the alternative of continuing the present sugar duties, because that would materially interfere with the general principle which we mean to pursue. I have thus, Sir, endeavoured to state as fully and as clearly as I could, the course which her Majesty's government intend to pursue, and the motives which induce them to take it; but I am not, and cannot be, insensible to the position in which we have been placed, as far as concerns the progress in general legislation. I cannot help feeling that we have proposed measures, in the course both of last session and the present, in respect to which that progress had not been made which we think might have been made, and which, not having been made, leaves us certainly in no enviable position. I do not pretend to blame either side of the House for this; but the fact cannot be denied. We must, therefore, consequently expect the same results at the close of the present session which were witnessed at the end of the last, namely, that we had presented measures connected with the internal policy of the government to the consideration of parliament, and had not been successful in obtaining its consent. We cannot, also, conceal from ourselves, that, in respect to some of the measures we have proposed, and which have been supported, they have not met with that cordial assent and agreement from those for whose character and opinions we entertain the highest and sincerest respect. But I am bound to say, speaking here of them with perfect respect, that we cannot invite their co-operation and support upon the present occasion, by holding out expectations that we shall take a middle or another course with regard to those measures which we believe to be best for the interests of the country and consistent with justice. We must continue to propose and to support those measures. Nevertheless, we regret that our measures have not been deemed entitled to support; and we deeply regret the forfeiture of that confidence which is necessary for the credit of a government, and which has not been so exemplified upon the motion of my hon. friend as it should be; not that there should be a servile acquiescence in all our plans, nor that we should receive indiscriminate support, but, at least, there should be given to us ability to proceed with those measures of legislation which we believe important to the public good. Our business should be to maintain and protect the great existing interests of the country, at the same time administer-



ing in them such improvements as we think compatible with their maintenance, and necessary for the purpose of ensuring their general efficiency. We have thought it desirable to relax the system of commercial protection, and admit into competition with articles of the domestic produce of this country, articles from foreign lands. We have attempted to counsel the enforcement of principles which we believe to be founded in truth, with every regard for existing institutions, and every precaution to prevent embarrassment and undue alarm, and we feel it necessary to maintain the laws which preceding parliaments have passed; and we will not conceal that in respect to our ecclesiastical institutions, our intentions appear to have been defeated in the House of Lords in regard to one measure, which, though it may be considered as isolated one, is still a very important one. But, though I cannot conceal all this, I shall deeply regret it, if we have forfeited the confidence of those who have given us so truly and honourably their support. But I cannot ask for it by encouraging expectations which we are not prepared to realize. We think the course we took the right one; that a gradual, safe, and circumspect relaxation of the sugar duties, which would have prevented undue competition in the domestic produce of this country, was the best. We cannot profess any repentance; we cannot declare our conversion to a different principle. We are prepared to abide by the engagements we have made and the principles we profess; and the same course of gradual improvement is the course we must continue to pursue; and I think it necessary to make this declaration at a period when important consequences may be the result of the ultimate decision of the House on the subject.

The committee divided on the question, that the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question: Ayes, 233; Noes, 255; majority, 22.

JUNE 20, 1844.

On the question that clause 10 be the preamble of the bill, Mr. Duncombe objected to the words "have freely and voluntarily resolved," &c., and moved that they be omitted.

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, considering the opportunities which the hon. gentleman has had of maturely considering this question, and the very peremptory manner in which he has pronounced his judgment, not only upon those on whom perhaps he has a right to pronounce a judgment,—that is to say, upon the right hon. gentlemen who sit immediately behind him,—but upon gentlemen also upon this side of the House, I think he ought—assuming the judicial character—to have made himself better acquainted with the facts of the case. The hon. gentleman says it was the proposal of her Majesty's government to give a protective duty of 20s. to British colonial sugar. Now, that was not the proposal of her Majesty's government. The proposal of her Majesty's government was to give a protective duty of 10s. But the gentlemen opposite who supported me never proposed to give a protective duty of 14s.—that was not the proposal of the hon. gentlemen who sit behind the hon. member for Finsbury—that was the proposal of the hon. member for Bristol; and if her Majesty's government had made that proposal the hon. gentlemen who supported her Majesty's government would probably have concurred with the hon. member in peremptorily rejecting that proposal. The hon. gentleman, then, is manifestly incompetent to pass a judgment, and he is so because he has not thought it worth his while to make himself acquainted with the facts of the case, which I really thought, until I heard him speak, were not unknown to one single member of this House, considering the lengthened debate we have had and the great importance of those facts; and I doubt whether the country will not be disposed to find fault a little with those who show such utter ignorance of the facts, and yet venture to pronounce so peremptory a judgment as the hon. member. The hon. gentleman supposes it to be a degradation for the House of Commons in matters relating to commerce and finance, upon one night, after receiving a full explanation of the subject ["Hear" and laughter]—yes, after receiving a full explanation of the subject, to reverse its decision of a previous night. But I shall have the hon. gentleman's vote to-morrow at any rate. [Mr. Duncombe: What about?] Well, now I am going to tell the hon. gentleman why he is not aware of what has passed to-night. I forgive him his ignorance of what passed the other night, but he really ought to know what has occurred to-night. The right hon. gentleman the late pre-

sident of the board of trade, expressed this evening a strong opinion that he would be able to persuade the House to reverse a vote of three previous nights. He said, "No doubt I shall be able to show you that the principle of discrimination between free sugar and slave-labour sugar is altogether untenable, and that to-morrow night you will negative the principle altogether." But on Monday, the 3rd of June, it was resolved, upon discussing a motion of the noble lord the member for London, to recognise the principle of discrimination. The noble lord proposed, towards raising the necessary supplies for defraying her Majesty's public expenses, that, instead of the present duty, 34s. a cwt. should be charged upon all brown Muscovado or clayed sugar, from what country soever it came, and that motion was negatived by a majority of 197 to 128. The whole of the subsequent proceedings with regard to this subject have been founded upon the proposition that the decision which the House then came to in negativing that proposal was a just one. Yet the right hon. gentleman or the hon. member for Montrose, perhaps on his recommendation, will propose to-morrow night to reverse all that it has been doing, and by so reversing its proceeding abolish all discrimination between sugar the produce of slave-labour and sugar the produce of free-labour, and place the two upon exactly the same footing. I can only say, if the hon. member carries his proposal, that it will be a complete reversal of the whole of our proceedings; and if those proceedings have been wrong, it will be a very proper reversal. But can I give a greater proof that in the opinion of hon. gentlemen opposite there is no insult to this House in making a proposal to reverse a former decision, and no degradation in acquiescing in it, than that given by the right hon. gentleman himself when he rises in his place and very distinctly declares that he shall to-morrow vote for a perfect reversal of all our proceedings, and that he has a very confident expectation that he shall succeed in his object? I stated the other night no doubt that this was not a mere question between 20s. and 24s.; but I said that a reversal of our proposal would materially interfere with our commercial and financial policy. I stated the reasons for the government proposal, and distinctly said that we could not act up to our desires with regard to free and slave-grown sugar next year unless this year we gave some sign of what it was our intention to do. I stated that to the House upon Monday. It had not been stated before, and I stated it then to show that it was not a mere question between 24s. and 20s., but that it was, in point of fact, a highly important question, having a considerable bearing upon our future proceedings; but it is quite new to me to hear that in matters of this nature it is a degradation to reverse our decisions. I recollect Lord Althorp in a much more important matter than this—with regard to the malt tax—when the House had decided upon the repeal of half that tax, came down to this House and stated to the House that important financial questions were involved in the decision, and asked the House to reverse that decision to which it had come; and I recollect that the House did, at the request of Lord Althorp, so reverse its decision—and I cannot concede to you the use or necessity of the various stages through which every bill must pass, unless we are at liberty in a subsequent stage to amend our proceedings in a previous stage. I must, however, grant that I am obliged to the hon. gentleman for the fairness of the construction which he has put upon the words I used upon the occasion to which he referred. I have been represented as saying with respect to other bills also, that her Majesty's government expect complete acquiescence in every proposal we may make. The hon. gentleman put a right construction on what I did say. I never gave utterance to so arrogant a sentiment. With regard to the Welsh bishoprics, I never stated that her Majesty's government expected acquiescence in their views; but I did say that it was with regret her Majesty's government found that their proposal was not approved of. With regard to the question of factory labour and the Dissenters' chapels bill, I found with great pain that the course of the government met with opposition on the part of many hon. friends of mine, who had given generally a strenuous and generous support to the government. I stated, I think, also that there were other measures which would be brought under the consideration of the House on which probably the same differences would prevail. I expressed my warmest acknowledgment for the generous support which the government had received upon former occasions from them; in asking their support, however, upon that occasion I did say that the government could not consent to purchase it by

an abandonment of the great principles which they had avowed, and to which they were determined to adhere. I stated that with all deference and respect to them and to the House. I did, no doubt, mean to indicate with respect to this question that I did think it materially interfered with our financial and commercial arrangements, and I did probably intimate what might be the possible consequence of a withdrawal of support. I thought it fair to do so. I knew I should have been taunted if I had said nothing about it, and had concealed my real opinions, and therefore I asked for their support—not because this was a question between 20s. and 24s., but because I thought it would amount to an indication that the House of Commons disapproved of our proposals with respect to the sugar duties. I doubted whether it would not be equivalent to a disproof of the principles upon which we were about to act—of discrimination between slave-grown sugar and free-labour sugar; and I thought it did amount to an indication of that want of confidence which ought to be followed beyond a doubt by such a result as want of confidence pointed to. Those were exactly the expressions which I used, and by which I must abide; but I totally disclaim the intention or the fact of having stated that with respect to every measure introduced by the government we expected the votes of our general supporters, and insisted upon the complete adoption of all our measures. Those conclusions have been stated for the purpose of dissatisfying my hon. friends behind me; but I do hope that my hon. friends—[Laughter from the opposition]—yes, I say hon. “friends,” for I must say that no man speaking of general measures ever received greater proofs of confidence than I have received,—I do hope that my hon. friends will not be deceived by the circumstances to which the hon. gentleman has referred for the purpose of promoting dissension not only upon this, but amongst gentlemen upon his own side of the House. It is perfectly right for the hon. gentleman to quarrel with his own side of the House, but I trust that the hon. gentleman will not attempt to sow dissension amongst us, but that he will allow us to remain united as we are, and I have no doubt we shall remain so. All that the hon. gentleman will have gained from the present proceeding will be—first, to prove that he has not made himself master of the facts of the case; and, secondly, the inutility of attempting to foment the disunion amongst those who are opposed to him.

The amendment was withdrawn; the preamble agreed to; and the House resumed. Bill to be reported.

## ABOLITION OF THE CORN-LAWS.

JUNE 26, 1844.

Mr. Villiers moved a series of resolutions having reference to the total and immediate abolition of the Corn-laws.

SIR ROBERT PEEL: I can very sincerely assure hon. members that it is not my intention to occupy much of their time upon an occasion when this House has been engaged for the benefit of a company which generally performs at Covent-garden. It is with great reluctance that I do any thing having the least tendency to prevent their enjoying a full benefit, and I must say I was very sorry to observe that during the early part of the performance the front bench on the other side of the House was wholly unoccupied. Of those places, there was not a single occupant until the gallant Admiral took his seat there; and even he was for a considerable time left alone in the occupation of that bench. I can assure the hon. members opposite—many of whom assisted at my benefit the other night—that I had no desire to be the cause of depriving them of a fuller audience. Throughout the evening, I have been here, as well as my hon. friends near me, to witness the performances of that class of gentlemen now present who have rehearsed their parts upon another stage. We have been here the whole of the evening, and we could not help listening with some surprise to the allusion made on the other side to the speech of my hon. friend the member for Northamptonshire. It was too much to say that a considerable portion of the time which my hon. friend took in delivering that speech was spent without his making any reference to the main question. It would seem as if the hon. member for Stockport would, if he had an opportunity, have advised my hon. friend to apply himself more closely to the main question. I cannot help wishing that he

had given that advice to the hon. member for Wolverhampton. The House cannot have forgotten that the hon. gentleman who came forward and who gave the tone to our deliberations, who, in fact, was the leading performer, took precisely the same course which the hon. member for Wolverhampton complains against my hon. friend for having pursued. The hon. member for Wolverhampton addressed the House for the space of three hours and a half; one hour and a-half of which period was devoted to the production of newspaper reports of speeches delivered at meetings of agriculturists. The hon. member who spoke last should recollect that his own leader is the author of this practice; and if the example of the hon. member for Wolverhampton be followed at this side of the House, the hon. member for Stockport is the last that ought to complain of it. He is the last that ought to complain if my hon. friends at this side of the House came prepared with documents to remind their opponents of what they may have said respecting this question on former occasions. Now, Sir, I was very glad to see the second topic adverted to by the hon. gentleman. The hon. gentleman delivered a homily against the practice of calling names. Well, it's a very bad practice, but it happens that those who are the most lavish in their attacks upon others, and in throwing imputations upon the motives of others, are very often those who shrink the most from the application of a similar instrument to themselves, notwithstanding the readiness with which they denounce the system of calling names and imputing motives. Sir, I think if there be any party in this House who deal largely in the practice of affixing odious imputations to the motives of those from whom they dissent as to political measures, it is that very party of which the hon. gentleman is so distinguished a member. I don't defend the practice, but the example provokes retaliation. They are exposed to attacks of which they first set the example, and then they are the first to declare that the practice of the calling of names ought to be dismissed from legislative argument, and the first to beg that for the future it might be discontinued. As they set the example of the practice, I hope they will set the example of its discontinuance. The hon. gentleman says, "How is the Anti-Corn-law league to be defeated?" Sir, I believe that they have greatly diminished their own power by the use of the instrument which they have employed. I believe that they have provoked on the part of the tenantry of this country the utmost indignation, from their use of unjust imputation, and from the practice of attributing base, selfish, and interested motives to hon. members. I believe they have provoked that indignation which has led to the combination against their proceedings. But a very short time since those hon. gentlemen boasted that, whatever the landlords might think, the whole of the tenantry and labourers were ranged on their side. I apprehend, and I infer it from that very mitigated tone which they have assumed during the progress of this debate, that they have discovered that they have overstepped the limits within which it would have been prudent to confine themselves, and that they have used instruments which have recoiled against, and in no small measure injured themselves. The hon. gentleman next calls our attention to the particular motion of which notice has been given, and he says, that we must not, and shall not escape from its discussion. But it appears from the speech of the hon. gentleman, that the question now under discussion is the total and immediate abrogation of all protection in every shape on agriculture and manufactures. Well, but if that be the question, why has not notice been given to that effect? Nothing would have been more easy, if that were the intention of the motion, than that the hon. gentleman, the member for Wolverhampton, should have given a distinct notice of a motion to the effect, that every duty imposed on the import of every article, which duty is not intended for purposes of revenue, but which operates by way of protection—that every duty on every article partaking of that character of protection shall be at once abolished. That is not the motion of which the hon. gentleman gave notice. The motion of which the hon. gentleman gave notice is simply this,—“That from the date of the passing of this resolution, protection to one particular department of industry, that is to say, agriculture, shall at once cease and determine.”

What he intends to do with respect to protection to manufactures we know not; but we do know the meaning of the motion of which he gave notice. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Cobden) shakes his head. Does he dissent from the character which I am giving to this particular motion? The motion is this:—“That any restriction

of the supply of food, having for its object to impede the free purchase of an article upon which depends the subsistence of the community, is indefensible in principle, injurious in operation, and ought to be abolished. That it is therefore expedient that the Act 5th and 6th Victoria, shall be repealed forthwith."

The hon. gentleman afterwards promises that having got that he will proceed to destroy protection on manufactures. I think it would have been more satisfactory, and more in consonance with his own arguments, if he had at least commenced with the removal of protection from those articles concurrently with its removal from corn. Well, I defend protection to agriculture on the principle, and to the extent I am bound to say, to which I have defended it before. I am about to pronounce no new opinions on this subject. I have a strong feeling, that speaking generally—and I am not now speaking of the amount of protection—I shall come to that presently—but, speaking generally, I think the agriculture of this country is entitled to protection, and that it is so entitled to protection from considerations of justice as well as from considerations of policy. I do consider that there are special and peculiar burthens on agriculture. I do believe that that portion of the act which imposes burthens for the relief of the poor, and subjects the profits of trade to those burthens as well as the profits of agriculture, has not, so far as the profits on trade are concerned, been acted on, whilst it has been acted on with respect to the profits of agriculture. I say, on that ground, that I think there are special burthens applicable to agriculture. I think, also, that there are restrictions on the application of capital as concerns agriculture. I think, therefore, that considerations of justice do entitle agriculture to protection. I think that considerations of policy, as far as the general interest of all classes is concerned, justify this protection. I do not think so on account of the special condition of the landlord, but because I believe that great public evil would arise were this motion to be affirmed to-night; and I don't believe that there are ten reflecting and thinking men, not excluding those in the ranks of the anti-Corn-law league even, who are of opinion that if to-morrow morning it were announced that the House of Commons had resolved that on next Monday week all protection should be immediately and suddenly withdrawn from agricultural produce—I don't believe, I say, that there are ten men in this country, even connected with the manufacturing and commercial interest, who imagine that such a precipitate withdrawal of protection would be for the advantage of the general interest of this country. See, if we agree to this motion, what is to follow in its rear! If we are to trust the hon. gentleman, and I am sure I give him every credit for speaking the candid and honest impressions of his mind; but if we are to trust him, all protection is to be removed—that is in respect to all colonial productions—in respect to coffee, and in respect to sugar, one fortnight after, every protection is to be removed. Then, my belief is that, in the present condition of this country, sudden withdrawal of all protection would paralyze commerce, and introduce such general confusion and distress, that so far from the labourers benefiting, they would be involved in the common calamity. The proposal, then, which we have to decide is, whether with respect to the whole of your colonial productions—with respect to the whole of your domestic productions, you shall affirm this resolution, which though it appears to be confined to corn, necessarily involves the removal of every protective duty with respect to every product. I believe that nothing but confusion would arise from such a proceeding. I recollect the time when the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Ellice) made a most vigorous defence of the silk manufacturers in opposing a sudden withdrawal of protection from that interest. Why then, did the hon. gentleman not give his notice in conformity with his intentions? Because he knew, that if he had advocated the removal of protection from every class of manufacture—on colonial produce as well as corn—he would have encountered a more formidable opposition to his motion, and would have even aggravated the majority by which he will be met this evening. I do believe that it is for the interest of all classes of commerce and of manufactures, that we should, in such an artificial state of society as that in which we live, deal very cautiously and dispassionately with the removal of these prohibitions. I believe that the advances you make will be much more sure if they are made without grievously affecting existing interests. I ask you to look at the extent of capital employed in the cultivation of the soil—to look at the population of

Ireland, entirely depending on its agricultural produce—to see the amount of the supply of corn obtained from domestic agriculture, at least nine-tenths of the whole quantity consumed, and to look at the condition of the population employed in its culture. I know, according to your strict rigid principles of political economy abstractedly—if we were to forget the condition and circumstances of the country and the interests which have grown up under the long endurance of protection—if we were to speak mathematically of these principles, no doubt they may be true. It may be true that a population from which protection is withdrawn ought to apply itself to other applications; but is that strictly true? If we are not mere philosophers and men of science having to deal with abstract or indefinite quantities, but have to consult the convenience, the comfort, the subsistence of great masses of millions of human beings, are we to disregard those convictions which must be presented for the consideration of the Legislature and of statesmen? I speak not merely of tenants under leases, but of tenants at will, and of the labourers. No doubt, as far as the law is concerned, there are few opportunities for the application of capital to other branches of industry; no doubt it is true, speaking literally and technically, that the labourers in Kerry and Galway, may go and seek for subsistence in Manchester and Coventry. That is all true enough in theory, but false in practice. How can you disturb a man who is far advanced in life, to the age, perhaps, of nearly half a century, whose father and grandfather before him were occupied in agriculture, and who knows nothing else himself? How is he to try this project, if suddenly removing himself from his old occupation and locality to new ones? Why, you would destroy his confidence in the application of his capital to agriculture as before, and you leave him without other modes for employing it. You may rejoice and indulge in these theories of modern philosophy and political economy; but when you have endangered and destroyed the peace and happiness of a nation, you will have but a sorry return for your pains. Looking, then, at the long endurance of the protection, at the amount of capital involved in agriculture, and the position of the population dependent on agriculture, and at the interest not merely of the landlords and tenants, but the comprehensive interests of all classes of the community I must give my solemn and unqualified opposition to this proposal for the immediate removal of the present protection to agriculture. But I will not shrink from the other question—am I prepared, then, as I am opposed to the immediate removal of protection, to bring under the consideration of the House any modified proposition for the altering the amount of protection determined upon two years ago, and carried into effect with the general good will and concurrence of the agricultural interest? I say at once I am not. I am not holding language different from that which my right hon. friend and myself held at an early period of the session. We said then that we never had it in contemplation, and now we say that we have it not in contemplation, to make any alteration whatever in the Corn-laws. The noble lord the member for the City of London is absent upon this occasion. I regret it; but the noble lord last night declared his intention of not voting against the proposal of the hon. gentleman. Now the hon. gentleman has very fairly called upon us to pronounce, to-night, whether we were for or against a total repeal of the Corn-laws. Nothing could be fairer than the proceedings of the hon. gentleman the member for Wolverhampton. You cannot impute to him that he wants to catch stray votes by a vague motion. He says that he does not want you to go into a vague committee on the Corn-laws, but a committee for the purpose of affirming or negating this resolution, that the present Corn-laws should be repealed, and no others be substituted in their room. Thence arises the difficulty of the noble lord—he is not prepared to vote against that motion; he is not prepared for repeal; for the noble lord thinks agriculture entitled to protection. The noble lord is prepared to give protection to agriculture. On what ground then does he withhold the light of his countenance and the benefit of his address from those hon. gentlemen with whom he is agreed? The noble lord said last night that he found himself in a similar situation to that which I had described the government to be—one of difficulty. No doubt we have met with difficulties as well as other governments. But we have overcome them. We gave our votes; we did not shrink from our difficulties; we did not think we discharged our duty by running away

from them. What was the objection to the noble lord's voting against the motion of the hon. gentleman? Because my right hon. friend intends to uphold the existing Corn-laws, he cannot vote with us, though he denounces the proposition of the hon. gentleman. But the noble lord was not always so squeamish. For, the other night, when vindicating himself for voting with gentlemen to whom he was entirely opposed, he said he should not have carried the Reform bill and other measures, if he had not voted in company with those from whose views he dissented, provided only that he concurred with them on a particular subject. But the noble lord does concur with us in disapprobation of a particular vote. He has had an opportunity of explaining the grounds on which he founds his dissent; but he cannot make up his mind to give that vote which his judgment tells him is the proper one. The hon. member for Gateshead is an advocate for a fixed duty, and he intends to vote for the hon. gentleman who has done all he can to repudiate his company. An hon. gentleman who tells him, "I do not invite you to vote with me on any such pretence; for the resolution I mean to move in committee is just as much directed on principle against a fixed duty as it is against the present sliding-scale." The member for Gateshead therefore has no more reason for the vote he is about to give, than the noble lord has for absenting himself upon this occasion. Now, the question between the noble lord and between the government is, as to the policy of making any alteration in the existing Corn-laws. We don't intend to make any alteration. I am speaking of those who admit that there should be protection to agriculture. The more discussion I hear, the more convinced I am that if protection is to be given to agriculture, it is infinitely better to maintain the present law than to attempt to conciliate any support or favour by any slight modification whatever. I think with the hon. gentleman, that is the real practical question:—Is the present law to be maintained totally and entirely without any qualification or modification of it? I declare, that I do not see that any public benefit is to be derived from altering the law, not for the purpose of repeal, but even for the substitution of some such duty as that proposed by the noble lord. It would give no advantage to trade. I do believe, that for the benefit of the trader and the consuming classes, the present law is far better than a fixed duty of 8s. would be. I should infer that, from the noble lord's own argument. I never heard a better argument in favour of a graduated scale of duty in preference to a fixed duty, than I heard from the noble lord last night. He was assigning his reasons why he so decidedly opposed the motion of the hon. member for Wolverhampton. The noble lord goes quite as far as I do in objections to the removal of protection to agriculture. The hon. gentleman supposes—which I do not impute to the noble lord—that the noble lord is influenced by his unwillingness to declare for the removal of protection; but the noble lord thinks it more convenient for a gentleman in his eminent political station not to discuss the question as to the amount of protection he would give. This is the language of the hon. gentleman; not mine. The noble lord thinks it more convenient to hold out to hon. gentlemen on this side of the House, that if the worst came to the worst, they would have a fixed duty to resort to. I don't believe the noble lord was influenced by such a motive. I believe him to be a sincere advocate of protection to agriculture; but he is in favour of a fixed duty in preference to a graduated scale. I should be sorry to impute to the noble lord any language which he did not use, and, therefore, I took it down at the time. He said, "What can you reasonably expect from a sudden revolution?"—that is, from the success of the hon. gentleman—"from a state of considerable protection to one of free-trade? The landlord and tenant would be doubtful how far their capital would be employed with profit." I am afraid they would be doubtful also under a duty of 5s. They would be so uncertain of the effects of a good harvest reducing the price of corn, that I am afraid a fixed duty would not relieve that anxiety which the noble lord said the landlord and tenant would feel as to the application of his capital. The noble lord said there would be a diminution in the employment of labour, and therefore a vast portion of suffering on the part of the poor. The next consequence would be, that there would be a much greater importation of corn into this country than would conduce either to the profits of the merchant or the advantage of the consumer, and therefore he would so frame his law as to guard the merchant from loss

In consequence of excessive importations. He said, that so important a change would give rise to extraordinary expectations of profit which would not produce cheapness or plenty; but, a glut which would occasion much distress—That is just what I am afraid of. I am afraid that with a good harvest in this country there would be a great influx of corn under a low fixed duty, which would be great discouragement to agriculture here; because when corn is abundant here, a very small supply will produce a greater effect in the market than is proportionate to the amount of supply, and that discouragement would not be averted by a low fixed duty. I cannot help thinking, that there is more certainty with regard to the application of capital under a graduated scale than under a low fixed duty; for it does not expose agriculturists to the effects of unlimited competition. Therefore, the noble lord, fearing a glut, fearing that the foreign merchant would pour in such a quantity of corn, that he himself would suffer, and that the landlords and tenants would be discouraged—just for those reasons he comes to the conclusion that a law which admits the importation of corn when prices are high, and prohibits it when they are low, is not to be preferred to his own proposition of a fixed duty. It is a remarkable fact, how small a part of this discussion has been appropriated to objections against the existing Corn-law. I heard it repeated again to-night, as it was constantly stated before, and denied by me, that in 1842, I gave to the agriculturist an assurance that the present law would secure to him a price varying from 54s. to 58s.—that was to say, an average price of 56s. Now, how is it possible that hon. gentlemen, if they refer to what I did say, can repeat that assertion? [Mr. Ward: So it was understood.] It was understood! But I must ask hon. gentlemen to look to what I said, and not to what they may have understood. I was told the other night that I made a certain statement respecting the bank; I positively denied it, and hon. gentlemen opposite bore me out in that denial. I did state, that I thought there would be no advantage to the agriculturist to have a higher price than 58s., or to the consumer that it should be lower than 54s. Taking 56s. as the sum assumed to be the average, and that which I thought would constitute a fair remunerating price, I distinctly added (this is not my own report, but the report of an impartial record):—"When I name this sum, however, I must beg altogether to disclaim mentioning it as a pivot or remunerating price, or any inference that the legislature can guarantee the continuance of that price; for I know it to be impossible to effect any such object by legislative enactment. It is utterly beyond your power, and a mere delusion, to say that by any duty, fixed or otherwise, you can guarantee a certain price to the producer. It is beyond the reach of the legislature. In 1835, when you had what some thought was a nominal protection to the amount of 64s., the average price of wheat did not exceed 39s. 8d.; and I again repeat, that it is only encouraging delusion to hold out the hope that this species of protection can be afforded to the agriculturist. To return, however, to the subject, I again say, that nothing can be more vague than to attempt to define a remunerating price."

I therefore appeal to any impartial man, to say whether it is not inconsistent with the fact, to say that I even countenanced the impression that the existing Corn-law would guarantee a price of 56s. When I mentioned 56s. as the average of past years, I stated that corn, as far as the legislature was concerned, might vary between 54s. and 58s.; and referring to former acts, I pointed to the disappointments which had taken place under them, and observed how utterly impossible it was for any legislation to guarantee a particular price to the consumer, it being regulated by circumstances over which the legislature had no control. I do hope, therefore, that hon. gentlemen will in future refer to my statements, and not to that authority, high though it be, to whose lucubrations an hon. gentleman has referred—Mr. George Robins, appraiser and auctioneer. I wish that hon. gentlemen desirous of judging of the present Corn-law, would refer to the debate which took place in 1842, when I introduced it. I wish they would observe the predictions which the opponents of it then made as to the certainty of its injurious effects, and see how far they have been borne out, or whether we ought now to be taunted for not having heeded those predictions. First of all, and the most positive prediction was, that the averages would be lowered 4s. or 5s. by the selection of the new towns. Now, the selection of the new towns has not altered the averages. [Mr. Villiers: they



have been lowered.] I beg the hon. member's pardon; if calculated from the new towns in combination with the old towns—although I have not lately looked at the return—I think the result will show that the averages have been rather higher by the incorporation of the new towns than they otherwise would have been, and that the duty has therefore been lower. Another hon. member predicted that the new scale would cause a greater amount of speculation than the old one, inasmuch as the stake being small, the risk would be less. Now, I do not believe that there has been so much speculation under the new as under the old law, or so much holding back of corn in order to pour it into the market when the price by reason of a scarcity had increased. I know that in April, notwithstanding the unfortunate appearance of the weather, no tendency was evinced towards the keeping back of foreign corn, and that in the last month there was imported of wheat alone no less than 80,000 quarters. In an agricultural journal (the *Morning Post* of Saturday last), giving an account of the existing law, I find these remarkable observations.—“There was a time when we had what were then denominated weather markets at this time of the year, when the value of British grown grain was regulated by the state of the weather—when favourable weather for the crops reduced prices in Mark-lane, and when unfavourable weather produced contrary effects. These good times, both for the producer and also for the consumer, existed, however, before the present Corn-law deprived our farmers of that just and fair degree of protection to their crops, against the competition with it of foreign agricultural produce, in all our great markets of consumption, which had previously been extended to all descriptions of native produce. In Mark-lane, yesterday, the alteration in the state of the weather did not produce any proportionable alteration in the value of home grown wheat, its price continuing to be almost entirely regulated by supply and demand.”

It was declared in 1842, that the present law would favour speculation, and yet now we find that there is no weather price for corn, that the price of corn no longer depends on fluctuations in the weather, but is regulated by supply and demand. Does the hon. member for Stockport recollect his prediction as to the effect the present law would have on the commerce and manufactures of the country? He declared in 1842, that by enacting it we were going from bad to worse, and that nothing could be more delusive than to suppose that any increase in the demand for labour or any revival of commercial prosperity could be at all compatible with its existence. “Don't flatter yourselves,” said the hon. member, “that with such a law there can be a revival of trade, for I can demonstrate to you that such a thing is utterly impossible.” [Mr. Cobden: “Are you quoting me?”] Yes, except that the language which you used was much stronger. The hon. gentleman said that Stockport would become something like a howling wilderness occupied by paupers. I won't say that the hon. member made use of the words “howling wilderness,” but he used expressions pretty nearly tantamount to that in reference to his own town. Nothing, however, could have been more express than his declaration that we were utterly deceived, if we supposed that under such a law as the present there could be any thing like a restoration of commercial prosperity. Now, without meaning to say that 1843 afforded that amount of prosperity I should like to see, yet, comparing it with preceding years, you will find that those declarations, those predictions of 1842, have been completely falsified. The hon. gentleman said in that year that we were not aware of the danger that was impending over us,—that before very long society in the manufacturing districts would be in a state of dissolution. [Mr. Cobden: “And it was so.”] It was so? Well, then, if concurrently with the passing of the present Corn-law, society in the manufacturing districts was in a state of dissolution, I ask you, what is its present condition? Is there not a great improvement in it, and has not the prediction of the hon. member, that the present law would be incompatible with an increase of manufacturing prosperity, been completely falsified? Take the declared value of the cotton manufacture in 1843, as compared with that of 1842, and you will find it to have been £16,200,000, that of 1842 being only £13,900,000. The export of yarn has diminished, but the export of goods in a higher state of manufacture has increased. Earthenware—the hon. gentleman particularly dwelt on the export of earthenware—well, from £555,000 in 1842, the export of earthenware has increased to £649,000. Glass has increased, hardware and cutlery have increased, linen manufactures, silk and woollen manufactures

have increased. During the existence of this law, which was said to be fatal, at least, to commercial prosperity, and intended solely for the benefit of agriculture, the export of all the great branches of manufactures has in 1843 greatly increased, as compared with 1842. The noble lord says, take great care of your imports; he draws a great distinction between imports and exports—a distinction which, with all respect for him, I have never been able to understand. I have given, in the case of exports, the declared value; I only give the official value of the imports. But, from the importance the noble lord attaches to imports, he will learn with satisfaction that, whereas the imports of 1842 were in point of official value £65,204,000, under the operation of the Corn-law, they had increased in 1843 to £70,093,000. I am only stating these things for the purpose of showing that the confident predictions that were made with respect to the practical operation of this bill as to the increase of the duty on foreign corn by the lowering of the averages, the increased encouragement to speculation, and its incompatibility with manufacturing and commercial prosperity, have been altogether falsified, and that her Majesty's government have no motive whatever, taken from the experience of the past operation of this bill, now to consent to its change. The noble lord (Lord Howick) the member for Sunderland, in the course of a very able speech last night, appeared to differ from the noble lord, the member for London (Lord J. Russell), and to be prepared to go all lengths in respect to the immediate removal of protection to agriculture; and the noble lord justified his opinions by an appeal to feelings and passions which I cannot but think are extremely dangerous. The noble lord predicting in 1844—as there were predictions in 1842—gave the most confident assurance that if you will repeal the Corn-laws there will be an increased demand for industry; that there will be, so far as legislation is concerned, the immediate restoration of prosperity. Sir, there have been many years during which, under the operation of the Corn-laws, there has been the unrestricted import of foreign corn. During the war, the duty on foreign corn was not in operation; the price of corn was then such, that the trade in corn was perfectly free. I cannot discover that during that period of the free importation of corn, there was a cessation of those privations which, I fear, are inseparable from the artificial state of society, in a great manufacturing country. I have the most confident persuasion, that if you were to repeal the Corn-laws, and permit the most unrestricted import of foreign corn, there would not be that immediate demand for industry on which the noble lord relies. The noble lord says, that the poor man has a right to insist from the legislature for this—that there shall be a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. In my opinion, no legislative enactment you can pass can give a guarantee that that right shall be established. The noble lord wishes to maintain the present constitution of society, he wishes, I apprehend, to maintain in the possession of its privileges the present constituency: but if his opinions were to prevail, my belief is, his expectations would not be realised—my belief is that it is impossible in this or any other country for the legislature to realise that expectation which the noble lord says is a justifiable one, and which the legislature ought to be required to realise—namely, that on all occasions, and under all circumstances, he who tenders a fair day's work shall have a fair day's wages. [Lord Howick: I expressly qualified the remark.] I did not understand the noble lord to qualify the observation. If the noble lord wishes me to proceed on the assumption that he did say so, all I can say is that I fear that great disappointment will arise from the position—that it will be found after the repeal of the Corn-laws there is not that perfect prosperity the noble lord seems to anticipate, and that the parties in their disappointment will revert to him and say, your remedy is imperfect. The importation of foreign corn has not fulfilled your expectations—there is not that demand for industry you anticipated—there is not a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. Now, we come and make use of your arguments and urge on the legislature that right we have. We fortify ourselves by your authority, and demand those further changes which will give us that right. I believe the noble lord's analogy between the state of new countries like Canada and the United States, and the position of a country like this, is totally inapplicable. I think that reasons could be shown why there is a demand for labour with increased wages in countries circumstanced like Canada, the United States, and New Zealand, which do not apply to an old country with great manufacturing establishments. I look to the United States

—even if I admit the analogy of the noble lord's to be strictly applicable—I look to the writings of recent travellers in the United States, and I find where there are no restrictions on food there still prevails great distress. In New York and in Philadelphia, recent writers have declared that there is the severest suffering on the part of the labouring population. On these grounds, I cannot place confidence in the predictions of the noble lord. I don't believe that the removal of these restrictions will have the effect of so increasing the demand for industry as to realise the expectations of the noble lord, that even the honest and industrious man can at all times command a fair remuneration for his labour. Thanking the House for their indulgence, I shall not now farther trespass on their attention. I have attempted to assign the reasons why I totally dissent from the proposal of the hon. gentleman with respect to the absolute repeal of all protection; why, without adopting any new opinion for the present occasion, I give my preference to the principle of the bill of 1842, over the principle of the noble lord, who is an advocate for protection; and why I repeat that declaration I made at the commencement of the session, on the part of the government, that we do not intend, and have not intended, to diminish the protection which the existing Corn-laws give to agriculture.

The motion was negatived by a majority of 204.

## SLAVE TRADE.

JULY 16, 1844.

Viscount Palmerston concluded a most eloquent speech by moving an Address for "A return, showing the total number of African Negroes landed for the purposes of slavery on the islands and on the continent of America, from the year 1815 to the year 1843, both inclusive," &c.

SIR ROBERT PEELE: Sir, I could hardly have inferred from the modest terms in which the notice of the noble lord who has just sat down is worded, that it would have afforded him an opportunity for making the rhetorical display in which he has just indulged—a more harmless motion than that which I read on the notices of this day I can hardly conceive. The noble lord calls for, "A Return, &c." [The right hon. baronet read the motion.] Why, really, Sir, a more innocuous motion never yet was made in this House, and it reminds me of the course pursued by the noble lord in former sessions, when, after a period of comparative inactivity, he was wont to come down to this House not for the purpose of stimulating or inviting ministers to activity, but in order to deliver a factious speech in making a motion to which the most captious minister could not raise the slightest objection. I recollect that at the early part of the session the noble lord exhibited some inclination to deliver the speech which the House has just heard. I give him credit for the extent and fidelity of his memory. Having, so long ago as the 11th of March, entertained this intention, the noble lord has, notwithstanding the multitude and variety of public business that has intervened been the present time and that period, not only retained the recollection of his motion, but also the very words in which it was put forward. The noble lord had, at the date I have referred to, a motion on the paper, which was of importance. On the 11th of March, I find a notice of motion—"That an humble address be presented to her Majesty, representing that this House, sharing the deep abhorrence with which the people of this country regard the slave-trade, most earnestly beseech her Majesty not to consent to any alteration or modification of any of the treaties now in force between her Majesty and Foreign States, for the suppression of the slave-trade, which by weakening the means which those treaties now afford for the prevention of that piratical offence, might tend to render more easy the perpetration of that detestable crime."

Now, the object which this motion was framed to effect was, I admit, most important; it was nothing less than to ask the House of Commons to request her Majesty to reject all proposals for the modification of the treaty relative to the slave-trade between this country and France. The noble lord wished the House of Commons, by the expression of its opinion, to restrain the exercise of the Queen's prerogative; but the noble lord had met with very little sanction to such an attempt on

the part of those who generally act with him. The noble lord himself seemed to shrink from his own attempt. Week after week of the session passed over and the noble lord postponed his motion as they passed, always promising to bring it forward, but as often shrinking from the fulfilment of his promise, as he observed amongst those around him symptoms of the disapprobation with which his course was viewed. The noble lord persevered in renewing his notice, till at length the noble lord was fortunately relieved from his notice by the House being counted out on the night when he was to have brought it forward, that very circumstance being sufficiently indicative of the opinion which his own immediate friends and supporters entertained of the motion. The noble lord, I must confess, appeared to me to be greatly relieved when he was thus extricated from the dilemma in which he had placed himself; for, notwithstanding the perseverance with which he constantly renewed the notice of his motion, he had the good sense to abstain from bringing it forward at last. At the same time the noble lord was unwilling to lose the speech which he had prepared for the occasion; and he has now, in my opinion, pursued a much wiser course by not provoking the opinion of the House in opposition to the royal prerogative, while we have reaped all the advantages which we should then have derived from listening to the noble lord. I shall, in dealing with this question, separate all those parts of the noble lord's speech in which he refers to the slave-trade, from those parts of it in which he has indulged in reflections on her Majesty's government. It is most important that upon those points on which men of all parties cordially concur, we should express that concurrence in a way that cannot be mistaken, and that we should not permit our party or political differences to affect the weight and authority which we may carry when there is a common concurrence upon such a question as that of the abolition of slavery and the slave-trade. In all the first part of the speech of the noble lord, I most cordially concur. I do believe that this is the most iniquitous traffic that was ever carried on; that it engenders more misery—that it stimulates more crime—than any public act ever committed by any nation, however regardless of the laws of God or man. I do not believe that the noble lord has the slightest wish to exaggerate; but I think the noble lord has perhaps rather overrated the number of slaves landed upon the coast of America at the different periods to which he has referred. Possibly I may differ from him on the point that the number of slaves amounted to 150,000. Perhaps it might rather be estimated at 100,000. But, however that might be, if my estimate be more correct than that of the noble lord, I still fully concur with him, that the number landed is no test whatsoever of the misery inflicted upon the people of Africa by the continuance of the slave-trade. I do not believe that the noble lord overrates the number sacrificed in the attempt to gain property in the blood and sinews of these unfortunate men. In what light I ask must we exhibit ourselves to these savage nations—what must they conceive of the doctrines and precepts of that common religion which we profess, when Europeans descend to become parties in this iniquitous traffic? And that I consider to be one of the great evils attendant upon the slave-trade, that it is an impediment to the diffusion and spread of Christianity; for surely savage people never can believe those men to be really impressed with the truths of the religion they profess, when they can be parties to the infliction of so much human misery as that which is the consequence of the perpetration of these crimes. I say too, with the noble lord, and it ought to be known, that there are two countries, and two only, which are now mainly responsible for the continuance of those crimes. There is on the part of every civilized country, with the exception of these two, a desire to co-operate in the suppression of the trade in man. If Spain and Brazil would zealously apply themselves to the suppression of the slave-trade in those parts of the world within which they can exercise jurisdiction, my opinion is that the slave-trade might be, and would be suppressed. France, Portugal, and also Denmark—to her honour be it spoken, she led the way; she set the example—the United States, this country, Russia, Prussia, Austria, every power is ready to co-operate in the suppression of the slave-trade. But whilst these two countries oppose themselves to the abrogation of that traffic, no effectual progress can be made in abolishing it. The public guilt is upon their heads, who derive a profit from this trade, and who are therefore unwilling to suppress it. It can be shown that these two, Spain and Brazil, are the only countries which lend their sanction to the trade, and are the only two who

derive a profit from it. They have the power of suppressing the trade, and without their assistance it will be almost impossible to suppress it. Whatever the exertions we may make, whatever the zeal and gallantry of our officers and men, whatever the sacrifices we may impose upon the people of this country for the accomplishment of the object, it is almost impossible for us, nearly unaided as we are in active exertions, to suppress the trade on the coasts of Brazil and Cuba. But we can do much, we have done much, though perfect success we cannot hope for without the co-operation of Spain and Brazil. Whatever may be the public burthens we are willing to incur, we are constantly counteracted and defeated by the connivance and evasions of the local authorities. It would be easy to show that Spain and Brazil might, if they chose, suppress the trade. Brazil made the effort in 1840 and 1841, and the effect was immediate during the period that the government of Brazil and the authorities acting under the direction of that government did actively interfere, and did discourage this traffic. During that period there was a great diminution in the number of slaves imported into Brazil. With respect to Cuba, the experience of the last two years proved conclusively that if an honest and active governor were in earnest to set his face against the slave-trade, he would, notwithstanding all the excitement to its encouragement which avarice and love of gain interpose, be successful in its ultimate abolition. I do think that the gallant officer who recently administered the affairs of Spain, I mean General Espartero, deserves, together with the government of which he was so distinguished a member, the utmost credit for the efforts which were made to carry the law against the slave-trade into effect. He appointed an officer, who proved to be a most honourable man, to take the command of the Island of Cuba—General Valdez—who refused to participate in the gains which his predecessors had shared with the slave-traders, and who also called all the planters and merchants before him, in order to acquaint them with the orders of his government, and of his determination to discourage the continuance of that trade. General Valdez adhered most strictly to this determination as long as he administered the government of Cuba, and the result, I am informed upon the highest authority, was most extraordinary and satisfactory. During the year 1842, when that officer was at Cuba, the importation of slaves did not exceed 3,100, it having been 14,000, in the first year that General Valdez was governor of the island. In the second year of his government, the number was reduced 8,000, and in the year 1842 it had fallen, as I before stated, to 3,100. I have thus shown that when the government of the Brazils in 1841 acted honestly and exerted itself to suppress the slave-trade, the effort was successful; and that when the same determination was manifested by the Spanish government, an honest governor acting on its instructions was able to suppress it most effectually in Cuba. These instances furnish, in my opinion, decisive proofs that without the authority of those governments being interposed for the purpose of putting an end to this traffic, success is totally impossible, and that with their concurrence the trade may be speedily and effectually put down. I, therefore, without hesitation, charge the governments of Spain, and of the Brazils, with being the sole abettors and encouragers of this crime among all the Christian powers of the world, and with being exclusively responsible for the sufferings it causes. I do most earnestly hope that the governments and people of those two countries will, with that regard which is due to their professions of Christianity, feel the grievous responsibility that now rests upon them: that they will consider themselves to be under the eyes of all Europe, and that they are now the only nations calling themselves Christians amongst whom this crime still prevails. But, if higher considerations will not sway them, and if by such motives as those which I have urged the people of Spain and the Brazils will not abstain from this inhuman traffic; if, I repeat, motives of gain are found to prevail over the dictates of justice and humanity amongst them; then let me warn those who persist in this course of the crimes which they are committing, and of the retribution which is certain to follow upon such offences against God and man. Let me remind them of the examples which have been recently afforded of slaves rising in insurrection, let me warn the government of Spain of the condition of Cuba, where the tenure of power over slaves is more than precarious—where those unhappy beings have been known to declare that death even was preferable to the intolerable evils of slavery—where the application of torture to those who had rebelled had only elicited the confession that slavery itself was the

state to which they were irrevocably opposed. The feelings which prompted them to rebel were not those of dissatisfaction at any particular law, or at being obliged to perform a certain amount of labour, or at having to move from one place to another, but the total denial on their part of the right of one man to hold another in slavery; a sentiment which it is stated is now spreading throughout a slave population that exceeds in number those who hold them in slavery. They are animated, it is said, by a determination to emancipate themselves, and the most determined amongst them, and the most active are, those who have been most recently brought from Africa, and who, though entirely uneducated, and unable to form a general combination, are smarting under the pangs which they had endured in being torn from their homes and their families. They have communicated the sentiments which I have described to their fellow-sufferers, a great impulse has been given to the negro mind, and if higher and purer motives fail to influence the governments of Spain or the Brazils, those of interest and policy must force themselves on consideration. What I am now stating is the truth and nothing but the truth, with respect to the state of the slave population in Cuba, and the feelings which I have described to exist there, are only repressed by the military, and by the extreme rigour of the law, which is enforced and sustained in a manner which I shall not here stop to detail, but which only confirms my impression with respect to the future. I therefore, viewing all these circumstances, think it right to make this appeal, in the face of the British parliament, to those two nations who are now alone responsible for the continuance of the traffic, and I make this appeal, but more on consideration of duty and of submission to the declared will of that Great Being, whom they in common with ourselves forget to worship, than on considerations of sound policy and enlightened self-interest. I trust I have said enough to show that public men in this country are not dissuaded when they approach this great question, but that on both sides of this House we are alike the organs of public opinion in England. That public opinion reacts upon other parts of the world, and being thus expressed, must add to the difficulty and danger that attend the prosecution of the traffic in slaves. I now approach the consideration of the very invidious contrast which the noble lord has thought proper to draw between the conduct of the present government and of the Cabinet of which he was a member. Whatever difference there may ultimately be proved to exist between the lines of conduct respectively pursued by us with regard to this important subject, there is none to be found in our principles; and, whatever may be the accusations against me of the noble lord, I shall certainly not deny him the credit which is due to the efforts made by him to induce other countries to join this in making an attempt to suppress the slave-trade. I am, however, fully prepared to defend the acts of government in this respect also. The great ground upon which the noble lord's strictures were based was, the conduct of the government in regard to the last treaty entered into with France in 1841 for the suppression of the slave-trade. In the year 1838, France concurred with this country as to the policy of inviting the other European states to unite in suppressing the slave-trade, and of inducing them to join in a common league for this purpose. France was, at that time, willing to concede the right of search. No objection was offered by her on the score of national honour. We call upon France to make no sacrifice, in this respect, which we were not prepared as a nation to concede to a much greater extent. France must admit we had no motive in suppressing the Slave-trade except a sense of public duty, and that no country could suffer more, if considerations of national dignity were to interpose, on account of the extent of our marine, and consequently the greater frequency of the visits to which we must be subjected. France, therefore, did give, not a reluctant, but a cordial assent to the proposal to enter into a common league, and for the right of search. The noble lord said the treaty was made ready for signature, and was signed on the part of the French government by the representative of that government having full authority; there was no allegation that that representative had exceeded his power; and certainly, under the ordinary rules which governed transactions of this description, we had a fair right to expect that a treaty so signed would have been ratified. So far as the King of the French and the government of France were concerned, I believe every honest effort was made to fulfil that expectation. But certain feelings of national pride did oppose themselves to the ratification of that treaty, and for raising those feelings I hold the

noble lord responsible. Before the ratification of that treaty, that important event occurred which interrupted for a time the cordial and friendly relations between France and this country. I will not enter into the policy of the treaty of July, 1840—it is beside the present question; nor will I enter into the policy of the campaign in Syria. But engagements were entered into between this country and three others, to the exclusion of France, with respect to Syria. Whether that were a politic treaty, or whether it were not, I have merely to state the fact, that it was the sole cause of the representatives of France having placed obstacles in the way of ratifying the Slave-trade Treaty, and I must here declare that those obstructions did not proceed from the government or the court there, but were *bona fide* the effect of popular sentiment, which the King of the French could not restrain or suppress. Can the noble lord have forgotten the debate which took place in the French chamber relative to this matter. Can he have forgotten the speech of M. Thiers on this subject? M. Thiers said, “He was not the Minister, either in 1838 or 1839, when this arrangement was first in contemplation. He was however informed by their Ambassador at London that the protocol was signed and every thing arranged for the signature of reciprocal engagements relating to the Slave-trade. But (said he) I wrote to the Ambassador of France that I was about to examine this matter,—that I had a long time neglected and but little understood it; but, for myself, I had the greatest reluctance to sign a treaty with a government which had so conducted itself as that government had done with respect to the treaty of the 15th July.”

In the same speech M. Thiers also added, “He was quite ready to admit that from 1831 to 1838 might have been notice sufficient to justify the concession then made; but he did not understand how, in 1841 and 1842, after the treaty of the 15th July, the enormous concessions contained in the treaty relative to the Right of Search would be justifiable.”

That was the opinion of the Minister of France, speaking in the year 1842, respecting events which occurred during his government. The language of M. Berryer and other heads of parties was of the same tenor. Then, I say, if we could not get a ratification of the Treaty signed in December, 1841, the noble lord is the cause of its non-ratification. The Treaty of the 15th July, 1840, which interrupted our friendly relations with France, was the cause of that excitement in the public mind which, being represented and having its effect in the Chamber, prevented the government from ratifying the Treaty. The noble lord said he would not call upon us to go to war on account of the non-ratification of the Treaty. If the noble lord admits that, I must say I doubt the policy of further remonstrance if we are not ready to follow it up with something more decisive. The noble lord may pride himself on the Syrian campaign, and the Treaty of the 15th of July, but he is the last person who ought to taunt the present government with difficulties which have arisen on account of the hostile feelings which the noble lord's measure occasioned in France. Year after year in the Queen's Speeches the noble lord took credit to himself, and congratulated the country on the maintenance of a good understanding with France. It is for the noble lord therefore to state, and I have never yet heard it fully stated, what were the reasons which interrupted the understanding of which for many years the noble lord was so justly proud. The next point which the noble lord urged as a proof that we had not made those advances towards effectually suppressing the Slave-trade, which he considers we were bound to do, is the fact of our not having taken the same view that he did with respect to the barracoons on the coast of Africa. The noble lord described his proceedings very summarily, by stating that he gave the officers in command of the cruising vessels stationed there orders to seize the barracoons, carry off the negroes they found in them, and to destroy those receptacles without regard to the strict letter of the law of nations, or being too nice in that respect. No doubt we are a powerful country, and it is possible to land on the coast of Africa and destroy these places, but it is important for us to ascertain whether the laws of nations or conventions justify such acts as these. They may be savage nations, and may make no demands on us, but there are European interests on the coasts of Africa; and if we choose to disregard the laws which govern the intercourse between nations, we may have to decide whether we will persevere in the acts we have committed, resolved to sanction or defend them at all hazards, or on complaint acknowledge that we are wrong and make compensation.

The ordinary course in such points is to take the opinion of the legal authority who is the adviser of the Crown in civil matters. This very question was referred to the Queen's advocate. He was told that we were most anxious to exercise every power we possessed for the purpose of destroying these barracoons; that it was said that no law gave us a right to do this; that if lives were lost, and we could be amenable to any tribunal, we should be chargeable as murderers; and he was asked whether the law of nations justified us in destroying these barracoons. His opinion was to this effect: "Unless you have a convention with the native African princes, you are not entitled to destroy the barracoons; this is not an act of piracy which the law of nations would take notice of, and if a murder be committed, you will be responsible for the act." Under these circumstances, we did think it right to give information to our naval officers that if they did destroy these barracoons they would do it without sufficient legal authority, and we did advise them to abstain from it until they were justified in it by the circumstance mentioned by the Queen's advocate, as it was the opinion of that authority, that unless we had a treaty with the native princes such an act was not justifiable. But, at the same time, we informed them, that "Wherever you can make such a treaty—with the free will and consent of the native princes—in that case the destruction of the barracoons is justifiable." Now I ask, under these circumstances, whether there is good ground for the noble lord's imputations on the government? I say ours is the wiser course. The noble lord might perhaps liberate here and there a thousand slaves, and alarm the slave-traders of Cuba by exercising powers beyond the law. But, in my opinion, it is better to exhibit ourselves to the native African princes as bound by the same rules with other powers, and that whatever may be the extent of our power, we will not effect even good and laudable objects except in the spirit of law and justice. The next point to which the noble lord referred, was a measure which he appeared to think was eminently absurd—and that was, the increase of the naval force on the coast of Africa, to prevent the departure of vessels laden with slaves. The noble lord may be able to form a very competent opinion on that point, but, I can only say, that if he denounces this as an ineffectual measure, his opinion varies from the opinion of various distinguished naval officers, who have served on the coast of Africa, and who concur in representing to the government, that the most effectual measure that can be adopted for the suppression of the Slave-trade, is to have a force stationed on the coast of Africa, whose efforts should be directed to prevent the departure of slave ships. That is the opinion of Captain Matson, who I believe is a most distinguished naval officer, and most competent to form a judgment upon this point. The noble lord seemed to think it disqualified that gentleman that he had served on the coast of Africa; but I cannot conceive any better means of qualifying a man to form a good opinion on the subject than such a service. Captain Matson says the present arrangements on the coast of Africa are most inefficient. You appoint separate commands, he then explains, but the Slave-trade is carried on; that there is a constant communication over the whole coast of Africa between the confederates of the Slave-trade; that they just watch an opportunity when our vessels are at a particular part of the coast; that they convey their information by means of signals, and then carry on the Slave-trade: but, says Captain Matson,—“If a greater force than there now is were placed there under a superintending control, no notice given of the particular station to which they were allotted, but to occupy various positions, and to watch the whole coast, he would undertake to say that in two years you would do more to suppress the Slave-trade than if five times the same force were sent out to the coasts of Brazil and Cuba.”

Captain Denman gives his opinion in the very same terms; he is an officer equally distinguished, having great experience on that coast, and he details the mode in which the Slave-trade is carried on, in which these wretched beings are brought to the coast for the purpose of being shipped to Cuba or Brazil, and he gives the same opinion as Captain Matson. Captain Tucker speaks in the same way. These three distinguished officers then, without any concert between them, but each giving their own spontaneous views of the policy to be adopted, come to the same conclusion, and say that it is in vain to have large vessels with masts that can be seen at a great distance, advise smaller vessels to be employed, and ask for permission to purchase the Portuguese vessels which were condemned there; that was the only mode in



which they thought an effectual check could be put to the Slave-trade. Acting then upon that authority, and knowing how great the line of the coast is, we have felt it to be our duty to make this experiment, and in a rigorous manner, in order to suppress the Slave-trade. But this was not the opinion alone upon which the government acted—we did not take it for granted that this opinion must be correct—the authority to which we referred this point was the honoured authority of my right hon. friend, Sir George Cockburn, and who, I believe, having seen the statements of these naval officers, took time, as his habit is, to consider the subject, and not to give a precipitate opinion, and upon that opinion we came to the conclusion, not that we should inevitably suppress the Slave-trade, but that there would be a greater chance of doing it by an increase of ships on the coast of Africa than on the coast of Cuba or Brazil. I appeal then to the House, whether or no the imputations which the noble lord has thrown upon the government are not without foundation, and whether the unfavourable contrast which he has drawn between the acts of the present government and their predecessors is not founded in error? I am not aware there is any other point which the noble lord mentioned in connexion with the suppression of the Slave-trade, but at the same time I must observe that the noble lord is wrong in supposing that it follows as a matter of course, that because we are to have a larger force on the coast of Africa, we must withdraw all precautions from the coasts of Cuba and Brazil. There is this great advantage in having a large force on the African coast,—that if you are acting on the coast of Brazil or Cuba, there is a constant demand upon you for the application of your power to other purposes—with every wish to make a great sacrifice to suppress the Slave-trade, yet upon those coasts some demands will be made connected with the protection of the lives and property of her Majesty's subjects, to which you cannot but pay attention. There is a war between Buenos Ayres and Montevideo, the lives and property of her Majesty's subjects are in danger. The force destined to take precautions against the Slave-trade in Brazil is suddenly required to leave the station to which it is appointed, and so far to interfere as to prevent any injury to her Majesty's subjects. You may say they ought not to attend to these requisitions, but I am afraid that according to the ordinary course of affairs there would be a temporary withdrawal of any force you might station off Cuba or Brazil; and, therefore, you would have a greater chance of continued action in Africa from its local position than you could have from Brazil or Cuba. It does not follow that we should give up all precautionary measures in Cuba or Brazil; but I agree with the noble lord, that if we entirely withdrew our force from these places and trusted altogether to precautionary measures in Africa, there would be a great fear of evasion, and that ships might be laden with slaves. I should, therefore, by no means advocate an immediate cessation of precautionary measures in Cuba or Brazil. But considering at what great cost and sacrifice this country has undertaken this duty of police, a feeling of honour, duty, and independence ought to induce Brazil and Spain to undertake for themselves their share of it, with a view to the positive prohibition of the Slave-trade. The noble lord referred in the course of his speech to the good understanding that exists between France and this country, and the noble lord says, he is always glad that a good understanding should prevail; but he spoke in terms which seemed hardly calculated to improve or strengthen it. I also entertain the same opinion on that point, and I am sure that it cannot be forwarded by any compromise dishonourable to this country. But at the same time, if with regard to their mutual interests that good understanding between France and England can subsist, it is essential to the interests of civilization, of peace, and of the welfare of the whole civilized world. I believe that it is the earnest wish of the great body of the people of this country to maintain that good understanding so long as they can do so without any sacrifice of honour, or the essential interests of the country. I believe that that is the predominant feeling of this country, and although it may be subject to occasional taunts of making concessions here and concessions there, yet I believe that the feeling of this House and the country is to support the government in the maintenance of that good understanding, subject to the conditions I before stated. But the House must be aware to what each of these two parties, the government of France and that of England, is exposed in pursuing that steady, and I think honourable course. In this country we

used to be taunted for concessions which we made to France—in France they were taunted for concessions which she made to England; and there are parties who seem to have their own peace of mind disturbed by any such good understanding, and desirous to do every thing in their power to inflame and to taunt, forgetting the honour of their own country, and throwing every impediment they can in the way of that course which leads to an honourable peace and the preservation of mutual interests. Then, says the noble lord, it is a great misfortune we did not unite for the purpose of inviting Brazil and Spain to abolish the slave-trade. I give credit to France for desiring that abolition. I believe she had as sincere a desire for promoting the abolition of the slave-trade as this country. I am quite sure that her interest is not opposed to that abolition. I believe the wishes of her enlightened government are in favour of it, and were France united with us in inculcating on Spain and Brazil the necessity of their observing treaties, I assure the noble lord that it would not be neglected by us. We have brought before the Spanish government the conduct of the present governor of Cuba in dishonourable contrast with the conduct of general Valdez, and we have told the governments of Spain and Brazil that we must insist on the fulfilment of the treaties we have made with those two countries, which imposed upon them a duty, not merely a moral duty, but a duty which they have contracted with us to perform, and for which we have given an equivalent, a duty imposed upon them, not by a moral consideration merely, but the obligation of a treaty, to adopt such measures as would lead to the abolition of the slave-trade. Then the noble lord says, he wishes we had combined with France to release the oppressed from their fetters, but not to enslave the free. Where can the noble lord find any ground for that imputation that there was any combination between France and this country to enslave the free? Does he think it can be for the interest of France or of this country, governed as they are by free institutions, to see a despotic government established in Spain? For my part, I wish that Spain may be governed by free institutions. I believe that such institutions, under the superintendence of a limited monarchy, is the best guarantee of peace of Spain with other countries, and of her restoration to that high position which she once occupied amongst the nations of the world; and France, I think, can have no other advantage with respect to those institutions than this country has. But does the noble lord think it would have been right for us to have interfered actively for the maintenance of General Espartero in Spain? I hold the character and services of General Espartero in high respect. I think he was an honourable man—that he was doing his duty towards Spain, and being determined to obtain for it a constitutional government, he would not assume to himself powers at the time of a political crisis which the constitution forbade him to assume. Probably his forbearance and moderation, unsuited to Spain, may have led to the termination of his rule; but whatever our grateful acknowledgments to General Espartero may be for the friendly feelings he manifested to this country—whatever our respect for his forbearance and determination to govern according to the constitution, and for his intention to place the power in the hands of the infant Sovereign when she was entitled to exercise it, and to abdicate for himself all the powers he held, with all these acknowledgments—if the noble lord means to say that we should have actively interfered to maintain General Espartero in Spain,—that we should have actively interposed there, I totally differ from the noble lord upon that point. I think that no country should resort to that kind of domestic intermeddling. I conceive then that the imputation thrown out by the noble lord upon the government, that they have combined with France to enslave the free, so far as it applies to Spain, was as groundless as his other charges. We have always held the opinion that the people of Spain are the proper judges of the domestic government they will have, but that we will support the government so long as we can by advice when called for, and they manifest a friendly disposition towards us; but I protest against the doctrine of the noble lord, that it is the duty of England actively to interfere, for the purpose of dictating any form of government to Spain. If I have mistaken what the noble lord meant by the expression, which was very strong, of our combining with France to enslave the free, I am sorry for it; but that is the inference I draw from the observation of the noble lord. I do not recollect that there was any other point referred to by

the noble lord which I have omitted to notice, except the noble lord's peroration, which I think was the main object of the noble lord in making his speech. I think the noble lord admires it very much, because he would have hardly made such a trumpety motion as this for papers, which I assure the noble lord I gave directions to be furnished as soon as I saw his motion, were it not for that peroration. Perhaps the noble lord would wish to add to the papers an account of the condemnations at Sierra Leone and the other courts; for, seeing the noble lord's motives, and concurring with him as to the horrors of the slave-trade, I was considering in which way I could give effect to his motion. But what ground has he for his accusations against the government? I will go through them all. First, there is the French Treaty of 1831; secondly, the destruction of the Barracoons; and, thirdly, the increase of the force on the coast of Africa. I really think I have shown that the noble lord has not one single ground for his accusations against the government; but then the noble lord had only that ground for the peroration of the speech, he intended to have made in March. He had prepared it at that time, and had since been repeating it to himself, and did not wish to lose the opportunity of making it; and then the noble lord took for the foundation of his peroration something which I said two years ago, that those who consented to make the sacrifice which office imposed, and who had to undergo the toils of it, looked not to the power which they exercised, or the pecuniary reward they might receive, but to the hope of establishing a claim to the gratitude of their country by their services; and the noble lord then says that I did not mean merely that fame which rests upon human opinion, but that I must have had regard to those higher considerations which are connected with a sense of duty. I believe that permanent fame can only be acquired by performing the obligations of public duty. I think all that sort of fame which depends on temporary popularity is exceedingly evanescent. I believe the only way in which it can be gained is by pursuing that course to which the noble lord referred, and regardless of temporary popularity. Therefore, when I said that I and other public men look for a permanent reputation as a reward for public labour, I meant to imply that their labour should be conducive to the welfare of their country, and prompted by that high sense of duty to which the noble lord alluded. But then, said the noble lord, "You have cut off, by proceeding in your present path, many of the avenues to fame; for," he said, "as to increasing the commerce of the country, or to loosing commercial enterprise from the shackles that bound it, it was impossible for me to do it, on account of the parties with whom I am connected." But we have, at any rate, done a great deal more than the noble lord, or than he ever contemplated until his expiring moments, when it was necessary to make a desperate effort to secure a reputation by becoming a free trader, and "releasing commerce from the shackles that bound it." But in 1841, when the noble lord's ministerial existence was in the greatest peril, it was hardly till then that we heard of these magnificent declarations of commercial liberty, which the noble lord tells me we cannot obtain. But I repeat it again, that we have done more without destroying any existing interests, though they were frightened at first—we have done more for the relaxation of commerce, and contributed more to the restoration of commercial prosperity, than any government that has preceded us. Then the noble lord says we cannot do justice to Ireland. He referred to the emancipation of the Roman Catholics from the civil disabilities under which they laboured, and says we cannot do them justice. The noble lord should scarcely have addressed that to me, for without claiming credit for differing from the course I had previously taken, so far as the measure for removing those disabilities was concerned, and encountering the hazard of such a step, I think the noble lord had no great right to taunt me with not doing justice to Ireland. The noble lord then made reference to the motion respecting the Irish Church last year. I recollect the speech of the noble lord on that occasion, in which he stated distinctly that he was perfectly ready to maintain the Church as he found it. The noble lord thought there would be no advantage from any such measures as that which the hon member for Sheffield proposed; and he made a very stout speech on the maintenance of the church in its present state; I therefore cannot well understand the taunt of the noble lord upon that subject. Then he says the opposition of the parties by whom I am surrounded prevented

my suggesting any measure of education for the people. We made the attempt last year, and I cannot say we were defeated by any hon. members on this side of the House. We made the attempt last year to establish a system of education on a great scale—there were obstacles in the way of the measure, but it was not opposed on this side. However, the attempt we did make, and, if it were so very limited, the greater the misfortune that it was so opposed. [Lord Palmerston: Our objection was to the principle.] Oh! the principle; but I do not wish to revive that debate. We proposed an extensive measure, it was opposed by the noble lord and other gentlemen on his side of the House; but it was not on account of any opposition from gentlemen on this side that it was defeated. But the noble lord said there were four great avenues leading to fame which were open to us. The first was the removal of the grievances under which the Roman Catholics laboured; the second was the Irish Church; the third was loosing the shackles that bound commercial enterprise; and the fourth was some plan of general education. But, said the noble lord, all these avenues are closed to you,—but there is still an avenue open to permanent distinction—an effectual measure for the suppression of the slave-trade. I assure the noble lord that the government are resolved, if that be the only avenue by which they can hope to acquire lasting reputation and permanent honour, that they will not neglect to enter it. They feel deeply impressed with the importance of the subject—not from any narrow, exclusive interests of this country—not from the absurd imputation that, having abolished slavery in our own dominions, we have some interest in the slave-trade being carried on by other countries—not from those imputations which ignorant and unjust persons may throw upon this country,—for they have a right to refer to the efforts this country has made to abolish the slave-trade in our own dominions, and to overlook all such imputations,—but our position as to the slave-trade is peculiar. In any attempt we make to suppress the slave-trade, we must endeavour to suppress it by means recognized and sanctioned by the law of nations. We must not in a hasty and inconsiderate attempt to suppress the slave-trade, unduly and unjustly hazard the maintenance of amicable relations with other powers. To injure those relations by any injustice on our part will only impede the attainment of the objects we have in view. We must keep ourselves in the right, and impress on others the necessity of observing moral engagements for the suppression of this trade; but with the reservation that we should proceed temperately and justly, that we should act upon the law of nations, and ask for nothing more than positive engagements give us a right to obtain, that we should observe the principles of justice towards the weak as well as the strong—with this reservation, I assure the noble lord and the House that the government are deeply impressed with both the duty and policy, from the highest considerations of the public welfare, of suppressing the slave-trade, and if that be the avenue to fame, it will be open to us so far as constant and persevering exertions can ensure the means of securing it.

Motion agreed to.

## CAPTAIN WARNER'S INVENTION.

JULY 31, 1844.

Vicount Ingestre having moved for copies of the correspondence between Captain Warner and the government—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: I beg to second the motion of my noble friend, for I am determined that the public shall at length be in possession of the correspondence respecting the invention of Captain Warner, and thus be enabled to judge why, after the correspondence I hold in my hand, inviting Captain Warner to exhibit his invention before professional men, the experiment has not been made. My noble friend has spoken as if Captain Warner were placed much in the situation of the inventor of gunpowder—that he has been treated with ridicule, and deprived of the opportunity of bringing his invention to a fair test. I wish the public to judge whether that is a correct representation—whether the government has not given Captain Warner every opportunity he could expect, consistently with those precautions, all will admit, government ought to take in matters of the kind. I shall

make no reference to what happened previous to my accession to office, farther than that I am bound to say, from what I have seen of the correspondence respecting the proposal of an experiment, that I do not believe the late government treated Captain Warner in any other manner than the present government has treated him. I do not believe that it desired to refuse Captain Warner a fair opportunity of exhibiting the effect of his invention; but those now present who were connected with the late administration will be able to speak upon this point with greater authority. It is totally beside the question what opinion King William may have expressed; those who act upon official responsibility must judge for themselves, and public departments cannot adopt any man's opinions, but must employ their own means by the command they have over professional persons competent to arrive at a decision. If they come down here for a vote of public money for an invention, it is not merely the opinion of King William that will induce the House to grant it; the invention must have undergone the ordinary tests, and by them the House will be governed, and not by the opinion of King William. My noble friend has stated correctly, that in 1841, shortly after the accession of the present government, Captain Warner's proposals were renewed. He stated himself to be in possession of two instruments of most destructive power—one called the Invisible Shell, and the other called the Long Range. A specimen of the power of the Invisible Shell was given the other day at Brighton, and I had an opportunity of witnessing an experiment of the same kind, but upon a smaller scale, on a pond at Wanstead. I now avow, and never have concealed, that the power was most formidable. I saw a vessel blown up as completely as by any barrel of gunpowder it could be done. I was told that it was accomplished by an invisible shell brought under the bows of the vessel. I had no opportunity of examining it, but I had no reason to doubt that the vessel was destroyed in the way stated. This invisible shell, however, always appeared to me of much less importance than what was termed the Long Range; because Captain Warner professed to be in possession of a projectile power which would enable him to destroy fleets and towns at any distance varying from one mile to six. I am very glad that my noble friend has relieved me from all reserve upon the subject. He appears as the advocate of Captain Warner, and moves for the correspondence, to the production of which I have no objection. I will give him as much of it as fully establishes the relation between Captain Warner and the government, and I shall refer to nothing that it is not my intention to produce. I will withhold nothing that will enable the public to form a judgment upon the course of proceeding adopted by government. Captain Warner said, that he was in possession of this Long Range, and he gave the following account of it:—

"I can project," he said, "100 shells of most destructive power, and I can repeat the operation with rapidity. If I threw them into Gibraltar, in a few hours not a man would be left alive in the place. This I can accomplish at almost any distance. By means of my Long Range I could bombard a fortress, and, with a single vessel, could cut out a fleet in defiance of the garrison. I could have demolished Algiers, instead of merely damaging it, as was done by Lord Exmouth with his splendid fleet. After that, I could with a comparatively small refit undertake to destroy Toulon."

This was Captain Warner's account of his wonderful invention, and we felt that a person in possession of such a tremendous power was not to be treated with disrespect. On account of the mere importance of his discovery, he ought not to be so treated, and he was treated in no such way. "I will receive," I said, "his statement on the assumption that it is all true; but one thing I will not do—I will not pledge myself beforehand to the payment of a large sum of money." This I told him I would do. I will appoint some of the most eminent professional men in the service of the country. I will not go to particular departments, and to the officers employed in them, but I will take from the service generally two or three most distinguished men. They shall not require the disclosure of your secret: they shall only witness its operation, in order that they may be perfectly satisfied that all that has been promised can be done. They shall make their report to the Government, or to me individually, if you prefer it, in order that it may not go farther. If they first take the Invisible Shell, they will have to see that it can be applied under adverse circumstances of wind or tide. Then they must be assured of the safety of those

who use this power; and, thirdly, they must have an understanding how long the government shall be in possession of the secret after they have purchased it. I reserved to myself the entire power of determining how much it was worth; and I wanted, moreover, to be assured that when we had obtained the secret, by paying for it, we should have the exclusive use of it. I felt that we ought to have the security that we could ourselves manufacture the same explosive materials, and that we ought to know how long we could retain the secret; on the first failure, for aught we know, it might be picked up by our enemies, and made use of against ourselves. I will not, said I, enter into any such blind bargain as that, supposing you blow up a ship, you shall receive a certain sum. Whatever may be done, or whatever may be stated in debates, I never will consent to any engagement of the kind, for I am aware of the disputes that will be immediately raised, even if I could foresee that the experiment would be as successful as that at Brighton, the other day. I would not enter into an arrangement to give even £5,000 to Captain Warner. A communication having been made from my noble friend, I wrote to the Master-general of the ordnance, asking him, to communicate with the admiralty. I said, "Take two persons in your respective departments, whose opinions will carry weight and authority with the country," and the individuals named to me were Sir T. Hastings and Colonel Pasley. Upon this said Captain Warner, "I decidedly object to them: I will not submit my discovery to them." I replied, very good; but that objection shall not prevent the fair trial of the experiment; I think the objection unreasonable, but let us select two other officers. Accordingly two were appointed,—namely, my gallant friend, Sir Howard Douglas and Sir Edward Owen. Shortly afterwards, Sir Edward Owen was appointed to the command of the Mediterranean, and Sir Byam Martin consented to take his place. The commission, therefore, consisted of Sir Howard Douglas and Sir Byam Martin, and I appeal to the House whether a fairer or a better choice could have been made—whether it was possible to commit the trial of the experiment to two men in every way better qualified to form a sound judgment. I will read to the House the first communication they made to Captain Warner, and leave it to decide whether it was possible for two men to enter upon this inquiry in a fairer, juster, or more liberal spirit.

"We are required, in the first instance, to ascertain the expense which may attend a series of experiments, in order that such a statement may be submitted to the treasury previously to any expense being incurred on the public account.

"With this view, we think it right to inform you, that it is our intention, first, to have your 'Long Range' exhibited, and afterwards a practical illustration of the effect of the 'Invisible Shells;' in both cases, the materials to be prepared on such a scale as you may deem to be necessary for real service. For your further guidance, in estimating the expense of preparing our materials, it may be proper to say, that we think the 'Long Range' may be required to be shown six times, and the 'Invisible Shells' three times; but in stating the proofs which we think might be sufficiently frequent, it is by no means our intention to put limits to the operations you may consider necessary and satisfactory.

"You will be pleased to state if any, and what assistance of cannon or otherwise you may require from the Ordnance Department, or any other branch of her Majesty's service; also, if it is your wish to be assisted by men belonging to the Royal Artillery, or if it is your intention to be assisted only by people of your own.

"In the first case, it is necessary we should know the number of men you will require; in the last, the charge you will make for your own men.

"For the greater security of the secrets you desire, we shall be very willing to have the experiments made in an unfrequented part of the country as may be practicable; and the place and time known only to ourselves, and to such persons as you may require to be present. We leave it with you to fix upon any locality in England provided the place affords space and convenience for the purpose."

Such was the first communication of the commissioners with Captain Warner. It is an excellent rule, in general, that those who profess to have made discoveries

should prove their value at their own expense; if not, the cost might be incalculable; and only this very day I have received no fewer than four proposals from persons, all professing to have made discoveries at least as powerful and as destructive as those of Captain Warner. They all require that the experiment should be tried at the public expense, contrary to the usual rule, which was not, however, applied to the case of Captain Warner. After public attention had been so much drawn to the subject, and after the speeches in this House—after the display of, I admit, a considerable power by Captain Warner—I consented that the public should bear the expense of a limited experiment. Out of this consent grew the letter of the commissioners I have just read, and this was Captain Warner's reply, dated 11th of April, 1842.

"I have carefully considered the letter with which you have honoured me, requesting to know the probable expense of a series of experiments illustrative of the nature and effects of my discoveries; also the number of artillerymen, cannon, and ordnance stores which I may require to have placed at my disposal. With respect to all these, I do not require either artillerymen or cannon for the demonstration of my powers, which are quite distinct from the ordinary weapons of warfare, as I have explained at some length in the communication explanatory of the effects I undertake to produce by my inventions, which I had the honour to submit, through Lord Hardwicke, to her Majesty's present government, and to which I beg leave to refer you, and request your careful perusal thereof. You express a desire to see an exhibition of the powers of my 'Long Range' first, and then, some practical illustration of the efficacy of my 'Invisible Shells.' With regard to the reversal of the order in which the investigation was commenced, I do not think it advisable. As I have already commenced my explanations, with reference to the 'Invisible Shells,' to admiral Sir Owen and to Sir Howard Douglas, I think it better to complete that investigation first, and then proceed to the 'Long Range.' If an experiment is insisted upon, I am quite prepared to make one, and enclose, according to your request an estimate of the probable expense as well as I can, in the absence of any specification of what you require to be done. I however submit to your consideration whether this expense might not be avoided, when I can refer, as eye-witnesses, to the following gentlemen now holding high offices of State:—the first lord of the treasury, the master general of the ordnance, the senior naval lord of the admiralty, the secretary at war, Lord Hardwicke, Lord Ingestre, R.N., adding, that the two last-named lords, together with Sir George Murray, have not only witnessed experiments, but have entered into the question of the practicability of my plans. I might subjoin to the above list the name of Lieutenant Webster of the Navy, an officer of much experience, but since it has been insinuated in the House of Commons that his judgment may have been influenced by feelings of private friendship, I do not press him upon your attention, though I beg leave to assure you that there is no foundation for such observations. Moreover, I will refer you to secretary Sir James Graham, for his knowledge of the opinion entertained by the late Sir Richard Keats of the efficacy of the invention in question."

The last part of this letter refers to the destruction of the vessel at Wanstead, of which I was an eye-witness; but I never saw an experiment with the Long Range. Of what use was it, then, to refer to me as the first lord of the treasury, for I feel myself wholly incapable of forming a judgment; professional men, accustomed to matters of the kind, could only judge properly of this explosive power. The commissioners, therefore, wrote to Captain Warner a most proper letter, in which they stated that they had been appointed to witness the experiment themselves. They wanted, they said, no information from the first lord of the treasury, and they repeated their demand for an estimate of the expense. It was at this period that Captain Warner stated what compensation he required in the event of success. My noble friend has affirmed that I made a great misstatement to the House when I asserted that Captain Warner required £400,000 in the event of success in his experiments; this he mentioned in a letter addressed to Lord Hardwicke—"In conclusion, I submit the terms on which I am willing to dispose of my discoveries; first, for my 'Invisible Shell,' £200,000; secondly, for what I have designated my 'Long Range,' also £200,000."

This was Captain Warner's proposal on the 2nd November, 1841, immediately previous to the appointment of the commission consisting of Sir Howard Douglas and Sir Byam Martin. The commissioners informed him that they were ready for him to proceed with his experiments, and the reply they received on the 20th April, 1842, was to this effect—that Captain Warner most respectfully acknowledged the receipt of their letter of the 16th, in which they stated that they had no authority to award remuneration. Captain Warner went on to observe that, as remuneration was the basis of his offer, it was impossible to proceed further until they had received authority to promise the remuneration he had asked, on proving his ability to effect what he had undertaken. In this communication Captain Warner also referred to his claim of £400,000, and concluded by adding that under these circumstances it was unnecessary to trouble the commissioners with a detailed answer to other parts of their letter. This was on the 20th of April, 1842, and then it was that Captain Warner referred to his former communication, claiming £400,000 as his reward; there can, therefore, be no doubt upon that point. In consequence, Sir H. Douglas and Sir B. Martin very naturally said there was an end of their commission—they had no authority to promise that sum or any other, and they closed their duties. It was after this that Captain Warner said, "I will be content to take any remuneration the first lord of the treasury will promise me;" but the commissioners replied that their powers were at an end, and that they could not give the matter any further consideration. Reference to the commissioners, and to their letters and the answers, will show that caution on my part as to money was not misplaced; but there was also some inquiry instituted, and certain questions were put to Captain Warner, parts of which, with his replies, I will read to the House. The commissioners asked him:

"How long is it since you satisfied yourself of the powers of your Long Range and Invisible Shell?" Captain Warner answered: "Twelve years as to the Long Range, and twenty-seven years as to the Invisible Shell. I sunk two French privateers at the end of the war, one off Folkstone and the other off St. Valery's Bay." When asked what vessel he was in at the time, his reply was, that it was called the sloop *Nautilus*, that it was a King's vessel, and that it was commanded by his father, William Warner. The next inquiry was, "Whether such an extraordinary circumstance as the sinking of two privateers in this way had not of course been reported to the admiralty?" "No (was the answer), we were not under the admiralty, for the vessel was employed by the secretary of state, Lord Castlereagh, in landing spies." "Then was the destruction of the privateers reported to the secretary of state?" "I do not know; it might have been?" "Were the facts recorded in the log of the *Nautilus*?" "We did not keep a log." "Did you receive head money on the destruction of the privateers?" "No, it was not claimed." "Were any of the crews saved?" "No, none; and the facts were only known to myself and another."

Such were the assertions of Captain Warner, and the commissioners sent first to the admiralty, to learn if there was any record there of the destruction of two privateers, and the answer was, that not a vestige of such information could be found. They then resorted to the Foreign office, because the vessel was said to have been employed by it, but there was no trace there of any thing of the kind. Thus, according to Captain Warner, the vessels and their whole crews were sent to destruction without any reward and without any record in any department. Observe, too, the account given by Captain Warner of his proceedings with his Long Range. He told them that it had been tried in the presence of Sir Richard Keats, with a two-pounder, at the distance of three miles. The mention of a two-pounder at three miles is most important, but Captain Warner would not gratify the curiosity of the commissioners by repeating the experiment. However, the projectile was sent from a cannon, and in Hainault Forest. When asked how he had proved the "desolating power," as he termed it, of his Long Range, Captain Warner answered, that he had tried its effects on some islands off Vigo, as well as upon the trees in the Forest of Hainault, at a distance of three miles. He added that he was at a distance of more than six miles from the islands off Vigo, and that the projectile tore up and shattered the rocks to a great extent. What was wanted was merely the repetition of this experiment. The ship



offered by the admiralty, the *Forester*, was amply sufficient for the purpose, and without disclosing his secret, a successful attempt, not at six miles, but at three or four, would have been held sufficient. The Long Range was to be tried first, and then the Invisible Shell. Most marvellous effects can be produced with detonating powder; but, then, another question is, whether it can be handled with safety. We do not merely want to see a vessel blown into the air, because the Board of Ordnance can do that, but we want professional men to accompany Captain Warner, and to see how Captain Warner applies his power with security. Above all, we want to see his Long Range—how he can destroy forts and rocks at a distance of six miles. The mention of a two-pounder shows that cannon are employed, and it is not merely attaching a shell to the tail of a kite or to a balloon, which may travel six miles through the air, that will do; any body can accomplish that without Captain Warner's aid, but he must mean that he can project his power in some way so that a ship, not at a distance of six miles, we do not require that, but at a distance of four miles, shall be destroyed. This was what was required to be done to satisfy the minds of the commissioners, but Captain Warner refused to do it: the commission was consequently at an end, and my gallant friend Sir Byam Martin very naturally made it his urgent request that he should never be invited to try any more such experiments. Nevertheless Captain Warner was not yet satisfied, and my noble friend still pressed to be allowed to prove the value of the invention. A debate took place here, and just after it Captain Warner published letters which certainly were not very complimentary, but that was no reason why he should be deprived of the opportunity he sought so earnestly. On hearing, therefore, that Captain Warner was dissatisfied with the course taken by Sir H. Douglas and Sir B. Martin, I wrote again to Sir George Murray, and told him that Captain Warner was sincerely desirous of bringing his inventions to the test. My letter is contained in this bundle of correspondence, and this other may be said to contain the first act of the drama. I requested Sir George Murray to confer with my gallant friend, the first naval Lord of the Admiralty. In consequence, two other officers were selected, not of as high rank as their predecessors, but of great professional experience, and of unblemished honour—I mean Colonel Chaloner, of the engineers, and Captain Caffin of the Navy. Captain Warner proposed that a third, to be named by him, should be added, but I replied that it was not a question of arbitration, but an experiment to ascertain the truth; the two officers were to make their report to the government, and I declined adding a third name, that of my noble friend Lord Hardwicke. The new commissioners wrote to Captain Warner, that government was willing that he should try his experiments, and they would bear the expense. What was required was, that they should witness the destruction of a vessel, and should accompany Captain Warner on board the steam-boat that was to be employed on the occasion. Captain Warner, in reply, said, "I positively object to your being present, and upon those terms I will not try my experiment." We said, "if the experimentalists are not to be on board the steam-boat, let us waive the objection," and we called upon Mr. Warner to state an estimate of his experiment. I said again, that I would not enter into a blind pledge to pay £100,000 in the event of a certain contingency, but I will appoint two gentlemen to consider the experiments, and to make a report to the government; we promised to bear the expense, but I wished him to make an estimate of the expense; and before I could consent to incur an unlimited amount, I wanted to see Mr. Warner's estimate of the expense of the materials. I confess that I was startled at the estimate of the expense. Many projectors are content to receive £2,000 or £3,000 for their whole reward; but Mr. Warner required £2,700 for his experiment with the Invisible Shell, and £2,470 for his experiment with the Long Range, making in the whole £5,170 as the expense of trying his experiments. My answer was again, that the experiment we desired to see was that with the Long Range, that we might therefore spare the expense of the experiment with the Invisible Shell, and proceed with that which we deemed the more valuable; and seeing what had been done at Folkestone, in St. Valery, and in the Forest of Hainault, I thought £2,500 a very large sum. I offered to place £500 under the control of the commissioners as a beginning, they would then watch the experiment, and the result would show how much further it should be carried. Mr. Warner for a long time objected to this proposal, but at last, though he said that the experiment would cost more than

the £500, he did consent to try the Long Range, and he said he would try and get his friends to advance the remainder of the money, intimating pretty clearly that he would have no difficulty in finding such friends. But after a certain period, Mr. Warner informed us that it would be impossible for him to make the experiment, as he could not find friends to advance the difference. The commission also terminated with that explanation; and thus terminated the relations between Mr. Warner and her Majesty's government. I have already stated, that in what we did we departed from the general rule with respect to the expenses; and though we were anxious that this most important experiment should be performed, it was our duty to prevent any lavish expenditure, and to forbear from entering into any engagement to advance a very considerable sum—if not £400,000, at least £200,000 or £300,000 depending upon a contingency which could not be foreseen. I maintain, therefore, that the treasury, and every department of the government, have acted with great liberality towards Mr. Warner, and I hope that the House will be of the same opinion; but I cannot sit down without saying, that from all my experience with respect to inventions, and with respect to Mr. Warner, nothing shall induce me to consent to enter into any engagement to pay £400,000, or £100,000 contingent upon a certain vessel being destroyed. I will know the mode of destruction—I will know the value of the invention—and I will know the power we have to prevent, that its being used by other nations, before I will stipulate on the part of the public that that very large sum shall be advanced; and if the House shall depart from that principle, there will hardly be any limit to engagements in which the public money will be spent. In order to show the necessity for caution in this particular case, I must refer to some additional evidence given by Mr. Warner. He said that any man-of-war could be altered to carry his apparatus. He was then asked, as it might be desirable to place a shell at the disposal of each commander-in-chief, whether each vessel could carry it, and he replied that it must be a vessel expressly fitted for the purpose, and attached to the fleet. Upon being asked how many persons it would be necessary to employ, he said that one man only in the fleet need be in the secret. If this were so, what precaution could be taken, that the secret would not be lost; and there could be no security that the secret would not be communicated, except the integrity of the person entrusted with it? To which Mr. Warner replied, that, of course, if they told a person he would be in the secret, but that no one ought to have it but the prime minister and the person who was to manufacture it, and that his instructions in writing would be quite sufficient. Now, Sir, I certainly should object to be the depository of the secret, or to employ the one person to manufacture it. I am sure that there cannot be a worse person with whom to deposit the secret than the prime minister, and I am sure that if there be not some other mode of preventing other powers from perverting it to hostile purposes, there cannot be a more useless instrument, and it is a responsibility which we ought not to incur. Mr. Warner was next asked, "Then the man would require £400,000 or he would betray the secret?" and the reply was, "He did not think an Englishman would do such a thing." I am sorry that my noble friend has imposed upon me the necessity of entering into these details; he says that he appeals to the House of Commons from the decisions of the former government and of the present government. He says that we have treated Mr. Warner without due consideration or due regard; but I am satisfied that for these details the House of Commons is not the proper tribunal for appeal, and notwithstanding what has passed, I think that the fullest opportunity has been given to Mr. Warner to exhibit his Invisible Shell and his Long Range; and if he has not, I am satisfied that the fault does not rest with the government or with the commissioners, but is to be ascribed to the fact that Mr. Warner has failed to do what he has promised to perform.

Motion agreed to.

## THE ADDRESS.

FEBRUARY 4, 1845.

Her Majesty's Speech having been read to the House by Mr. Speaker, Mr. Charteris moved, and Mr. Thomas Baring seconded the Address in reply.

Rising after Mr. Gladstone, who, in a short speech, explained the motives which had compelled him to separate himself from the government—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows:—I feel confident that this House will show that generous regard for the strength of private and personal feelings, if, however important are the other matters which have been introduced in the course of this discussion, I commence my observations by a reference to that subject of deep interest to me and to my colleagues which has just been brought under the notice of the House by my right hon. friend. For his abilities I entertain the highest respect and admiration—admiration equalled only by my respect for his private character. I confirm in every particular the statements made by my right hon. friend. My right hon. friend did intimate to his colleagues at an early period, that he thought it improbable he should be enabled to co-operate with them, as a member of the Queen's government, and with the responsibilities and obligations which that situation implies, in the measures they had in contemplation with respect to education in Ireland. If my right hon. friend did not immediately press his resignation, for that I am responsible. I was unwilling to lose, until the latest moment, the advantages I derived from one I consider capable of rendering the highest and most eminent services to the country, and who was a distinguished ornament of the government. I think it right to state, or rather re-state, that it is not with regard to any question of commercial policy that my right hon. friend has sent in his resignation. For three years I have been closely connected with my right hon. friend in the introduction of measures connected with the financial policy of the country; and I feel it my duty openly to avow that it seems almost impossible that two public men, acting together so long, should have had so little divergence in their opinions upon such questions. My right hon. friend has, very properly, having been so long a member of her Majesty's government, felt himself precluded from referring in detail to the measures contemplated. But I, being precluded by no such feeling of delicacy, may state, in the face of the House and the country, what that difference of opinion was. The House may remember that in the course of last session, upon a motion by an hon. gentleman opposite, the member for Waterford, I made a declaration to this effect, namely, that her Majesty's government would, during the recess, apply themselves to the great question of academical education in Ireland; that I did admit, looking at the population, looking at the state of the country with respect to universities, looking at the state of Scotland with respect to the opportunities there for academical education, seeing that in England there were the two great universities of Oxford and Cambridge, that more recently there had been established in the metropolis two colleges, since united, that in Scotland there were no fewer than five universities; and then, looking to the state of Ireland, and finding that, with the exception of the establishment at Belfast, there was only one university, I was disposed to admit, that in Ireland there did not exist the same facilities for academical education as in England and Scotland. I trust it is unnecessary to say, that I did not make that statement for the purpose of evading any temporary difficulty. I made it deliberately, and with a firm conviction of its truth, on the part of myself and my colleagues, and that it was a pledge which should be fulfilled, and with the determination that I would not by general phrases encourage expectations which should not be realised. We shall therefore be prepared to fulfil that pledge. We have considered the question of academical education in Ireland, and at an early period of the present session we shall propose an increase of facilities for academical education, open to all classes of her Majesty's subjects in that country. I stated also upon that occasion, with reference to that particular matter, on which, as my right hon. friend has truly said, there are great opportunities for raising religious excitement and feeling in this country—I did not, at the close of the last session, shrink from the declaration that, among other institutions connected with academical education, the state of the college of Maynooth should undergo the consideration of the government. Sir, we do intend to make a proposal to this House, and I frankly state, on the very first day of the session, that it is our intention to propose to parliament a liberal increase of the vote for the college of Maynooth. It may be recollected, that when in opposition I resisted a motion made for the purpose of taking from that college the allowance now annually granted to it. I stated that such a proposal was in violation of an engagement which had been entered into by a parliament exclusively Protestant—the parliament of Ireland—and that that engagement was to provide domestic education for Roman Catholic ecclesiastics in Ireland; and that such

engagement was not necessarily fulfilled by a regular annual payment of a customary allowance. The engagement was to supply the want of ecclesiastical education, by the foundation of a college for the giving a spiritual education in that country; and if the population of the country be increased, or if the means of furnishing such education be diminished, I think you are but acting in accordance with the original implied engagement of the Irish parliament if you supply increased means for ecclesiastical education in that country. I beg to state also, with equal distinctness, that we do not propose to accompany that increased vote by any regulation with respect to the doctrine, discipline, or management of the college, which can diminish the grace and favour of the grant. I rejoice in the opportunity, at the commencement of the session, in making frankly this statement, because I know it is a subject upon which religious feeling can be easily excited. But I think I may refer to the retirement of my right hon. friend, and to the sacrifice which we have made by the loss of him as a colleague, and to the danger to which we may possibly expose ourselves, by the fact of his retirement, to increasing possibly the apprehensions and alarm upon the subject, notwithstanding his earnest desire to prevent it,—I think I may refer to these facts as a conclusive proof of what is the real disposition of her Majesty's government upon this subject. And that is my answer to the insinuations and imputations of the noble lord. The noble lord, notwithstanding the candid spirit manifested in many of his observations, could not resist the opportunity of taking a petty and party advantage by attempting to poison the public mind, and to diminish the grace and favour of these acts of liberality which he so cordially approves of, by trying to persuade the people of Ireland that they ought to reject those measures when they are offered. What a spirit has the noble lord spoken in to-night of the course we have taken with respect to the Roman Catholics of Ireland! How has the noble lord spoken of the Roman Catholic bequest bill? There was no pressure, there was no threat, there was no menace upon the subject. Indeed the very question was hardly mentioned out of parliament; but the government, seeing that there was an exclusive Protestant Commission for the management of Roman Catholic bequests, it did occur to them that it was a measure of justice to permit the Roman Catholics to exercise some degree of control over the acts of the commission. I therefore proposed a measure which, I repeat, was not called for by any public demonstration, by which the Roman Catholic prelates should have some power, and we were told that it would make the measure more palatable if the Roman Catholic ecclesiastics were permitted to be members of the commission. We stated at the time that we thought it unwise to fetter the Crown by a positive enactment; but I did ask the House to give the Crown its confidence in the exercise of its discretion, and, notwithstanding public clamour, I asked the House to believe that we would carry out the measure in the spirit in which it was proposed. And what course did we take? Out of the five Roman Catholic commissioners, the three first proposed were Roman Catholic prelates. We left the appointment of the secretary to the commissioners. The Roman Catholic prelates who were nominated—Dr. Murray, Dr. Crolly, and Dr. Denvir—all men devoted to their religious functions and to the offices of private life nevertheless felt it to be their duty, convinced of the fair and honourable intentions of the government, and disregarding popular clamour, to accept the office which the government proposed to them; and now comes the noble lord—standing as he does at the head of a great political party—and thinks it expedient and wise to use his best efforts to neutralise all these beneficial efforts on the part of her Majesty's government, by exciting political animosities in the minds of the people of Ireland against the measure. Says the noble lord, "who can wonder that the Roman Catholics should remember these things?" Why, indeed, no one can wonder when the noble lord himself deems it not unworthy of him—at the head of a large political party—to treasure up in his memory all the vituperative expressions of the newspapers of the day, and quotes exasperating expressions, such as "surpliced ruffians" and "demon priesthood," for the purpose of recalling them to the recollections of the public mind in Ireland, and fixing them in its memory. What public man ever used the words "surpliced ruffians," or "demon priesthood?" [An hon. member: They were used by the *Times*.] I care not who used them; they never were used by me, or by any of my political friends. I utterly deny that I, or any of my friends, have ever countenanced insults to the

Roman Catholics of Ireland; and as a complete refutation of the reckless allegation of the noble lord, I refer the people of Ireland to the painful sacrifice which we have made by giving up the co-operation of my right hon. friend (Mr. Gladstone), and by incurring the danger which the loss of his service on a religious question may expose us to. I refer to these substantial facts as an answer to the small insinuations of the noble lord. But those insinuations will not divert us from the course I have indicated. In that course it is our determination to persevere. The House may depend upon it, that the general spirit of the engagement to which I refer will be fulfilled, and practically carried out. With regard to the subject more immediately under the consideration of the House—I mean the address to her Majesty's most gracious speech—I am sure the House will excuse me, if, in the first instance, I congratulate the house upon the talent and information which have been displayed by the two hon. gentlemen who moved and who seconded the address. My hon. friend (Mr. Charteris), who has spoken to-night for the first time, I trust, will remember, although he has met with general approbation, that he has incurred a weighty responsibility by the success of his own efforts. He has a long and honourable career before him. He has proved to-night that he is able to distinguish himself in the public service, and that if he should not apply himself by exertion to attain that distinction which it is quite evident he can command, he will greatly disappoint the hopes he has this night excited by the evidence he has given of his great ability, great judgment, great moderation, and great discretion. I also hope that my hon. friend who seconded the address (Mr. T. Baring) will be aware that he cannot make a better use of that commercial experience which he possesses, than by addressing this House on all matters relating to the commercial interests of this country. A great part of our time is, undoubtedly, necessarily occupied in party contests: but I can assure my hon. friend, that although the discussions on commercial subjects, and the giving of commercial information to the House, may partake somewhat of less excitement than the contests of partisans among political men, yet this House and the country will estimate the service of those, who keeping aloof from party, shall devote their minds to commercial pursuits, and communicate to parliament matters of importance connected with the great trading interests of the realm. The noble lord has admitted that in the speech delivered by her Majesty this day, and in the answer to that speech, and also in the speeches of the mover and seconder of that address, he can scarcely see any thing to find fault with. Of the speech the noble lord said he had no complaint to make; neither of the address, nor of what fell from the mover and seconder. That being the case, I wonder the noble lord did not approach the commencement of the session with something more of an equitable temperament. What was there for the noble lord to be wroth at? And yet the noble lord has given utterance to a most violent and bitter party speech. Is it that the noble lord's temper has been provoked by the contrast which the speech from the throne this day presents to the speeches which the noble lord, when in power, was obliged to counsel? Is it the congratulations which her Majesty offers to parliament on the present state of the trade and commerce of the country, of the improved condition of the manufacturing industrial classes, and above all, of the flourishing state of the public revenue; is it these things which have suggested to the noble lord reminiscences of a very painful nature, and which have disturbed that equanimity of temper which is usually displayed by him, and which is generally observed on the first day of session?

“Vixque tenet lacrymas, quia nil lacrymabile cernit.”

I cannot conceive with what part of the policy of her Majesty's government it is that the noble lord anxiously finds fault. The noble lord has spoken of the abrupt expulsion of Mr. Pritchard from Tahiti, an island many thousand miles distant from Great Britain, accompanied by circumstances very imperfectly known. The noble lord states that he thinks the French officer was entirely justified, or might have been entirely justified, if an island of which the French had *de facto* possession was in a state of revolt, and if the French officer thought that an Englishman residing there encouraged that spirit of revolt, to send that person out of the island. He says that the danger might be very great,

and might supersede the ordinary course of law, and he did not dispute the right of the French officer to expatriate Mr. Pritchard; but the noble lord says that the circumstances under which the expulsion of Mr. Pritchard took place was a great outrage. I entirely agree with the noble lord; and I consider that the manner in which Mr. Pritchard was expelled, and the expressions which were used towards him, justified the expressions which I used when I called it a gross outrage. But her Majesty's government think that they have obtained a moderate and fair reparation for that wrong. They have just got that which the noble lord says they ought to have. We did not ask for more—we did not demand more; and I should deeply regret if we had any occasion to triumph in this matter, or to consider that we had gained an advantage over France. I should, in that case, have felt that such a reparation would have been most imperfect and most unsatisfactory, and altogether inconsistent with the maintenance of that good understanding between the two countries which it is so desirable to maintain. Any reparation that would have been humiliating to France would have been matter of deep regret to me. The noble lord says that two months were allowed to pass before her Majesty's ministers succeeded in getting reparation. Well, I must say that, to have effected a reconciliation between two great nations, looking at the state of the public mind in both countries, and to have brought every thing to an amicable conclusion in two months, is not a very unsatisfactory result. It might have been protracted for a longer period; but it was completed within that time, and what issued? Within two or three weeks after the public mind of this country had been so inflamed upon this subject, the King of the French came to England, returning the visit made to him by our own gracious Sovereign. The noble lord says that we made an extravagant demand upon France. Sir, we made no demand. We lost not an hour in stating to France what had occurred. We preferred no demand, and we stated distinctly, "we rely entirely on you to make us the reparation we have a right to demand of you." If the noble lord will read the speech of the French minister, he will find it there expressly stated that the English government preferred no demand, but stated what had actually occurred, and that we had declared that notwithstanding the delay in effecting an arrangement, our confidence remained unabated that the French government would voluntarily tender all the reparation this country could expect. The noble lord says that we have complimented our wisdom in the speech delivered from the Throne, as to the course which we have taken upon this subject. The noble lord is completely wrong. We have not complimented ourselves. I should have thought it very unwise to have advised her Majesty to have introduced in a speech from the throne to parliament any compliments to her own ministers. All that we say in the speech is, that this affair has been settled by the justice and moderation of the two governments; and we say not one word about the wisdom of the course of proceeding. Therefore, all that brilliant part of the noble lord's speech has no foundation whatever. My opinion remains unshaken, that it is for the interest of England, for the interest of France, for the interest of Europe, and for the interest of civilisation, that a good understanding should be maintained between England and France. A bad understanding may prevail between distant countries, and may not lead to war; but between England and France you have hardly an alternative between a cordial and friendly understanding and hostility. There are countries which immediately border by land upon France, but do not suppose that upon that account their relations with that country are more close than yours. The sea which divides you from the continent only facilitates the intercourse between the two nations, and you are in fact nearer to France than any other country. By steam navigation across the channel, you are brought into closer contact with France than if you were a continental power; and as steam navigation advances, the more intimate will be your connection with that country. You cannot, therefore, prefer any other terms with France than those of confidence, founded upon a desire, by amicable explanation, by arrangement, and by mutual concession, to heal the little differences that may, in our various relations with distant portions of the globe, prevail between the two countries. It is by the existence of a cordial and friendly understanding between the governments of the two nations, that you will be able to appease the passions that will, from time to time, be excited by the acts of subordinate agents, acting at a distance from home, and without authority. There has not been one reparation

made by France to us, that I would not at once have counselled the English government to have made to France, if circumstances had been reversed; and I think it would not have been wise in us to ask any reparation from France which we would not have granted ourselves. See what the position of France and England is with respect to its influence over affairs in the other hemisphere. See how our cordial and mutual understanding bears upon other countries on the west of the Atlantic. Our relations with France differ from those of any other power. It is of the utmost importance with respect to your conduct, and your relations with the South American States, that there should prevail a friendly understanding between France and this country. I believe I am stating what is the general opinion of this country. I believe there is a general desire on the part of the people of this country to maintain the most amicable and friendly relations with France. I would not, I trust it is needless for me to say, maintain such relations at the expense or honour of England. Neither do I think it at all inconsistent with the most friendly understanding with France, that this country should adopt every measure which a sense of protection and security may suggest. I trust it is perfectly compatible with the most friendly feelings between the two countries, to take those proper and adequate precautions in a time of peace which circumstances may point out as being necessary, in order to be prepared to meet every contingency that may arise. The noble lord has referred to the question on the Right of Search. I think it better to defer any discussion on that question, until a communication shall have been made to the House, and papers laid before it. The House will be then able to judge whether we have in point of fact made any compromise in attempting to accomplish that which I freely admit ought to be our object—namely, the effectual suppression of the detestable traffic in slaves. After the sacrifice which this country has made, I believe that we are under the highest political and moral obligations to adopt all the measures which can, consistently with the general law of nations, effectually suppress the Slave Trade. But observe, the French Chambers have declared twice, I believe, against this Right of Search; public opinion in France has been raised against it, and say what you will, the Right of Search becomes, in a material degree, paralysed when it is exercised against the sense of the organs of public opinion, and against the general sense of the country. Though the Right of Search might be most efficacious for its object, when carried into effect with the perfect good-will and concurrence of both parties; yet, if the French Chambers, by almost unanimous votes, do think fit, which I deeply regret, to denounce this Right of Search, and look to their government to attempt to substitute something in lieu thereof, it is quite impossible not to expect that the existence of such a feeling must throw obstacles in the way of carrying it into practice. What, then, does M. Guizot propose? Avowing that the object of the French government is the same as ours:—declaring its anxiety to abolish the odious traffic in slaves, the French minister asks whether it be possible to substitute for the measures which we adopt, under the Right of Search, other measures equally efficacious, and, to use his own expression, more efficacious than the Right of Search? Our object being the suppression of the Slave Trade, would it be wise, seeing the state of opinion in France, to refuse all consideration of the question? In our answer, we state that we retain our opinion as to the obligation of putting down the Slave Trade; and that we cannot consent to give up any powers we may possess, unless we can satisfy ourselves that some other measures, at least as efficacious, can be adopted. The policy of entering into the inquiry mainly depends on the instruments by which that inquiry will be conducted. Whom does the French minister propose to conduct the inquiry on the part of France? One of the highest authorities in France; one who is universally respected—the Duke de Broglie, who is ready to sacrifice political power for the purpose of endeavouring to effect that great object, the suppression of the Slave Trade. It was this illustrious individual who counselled one treaty, and concluded the other in 1831 and 1833; and, if prejudices are to operate on the subject, all his are in favour of the maintenance of the treaty. This is the man offered by the French government to us, for the purpose of determining whether any measures more efficacious than the Right of Search can be devised. Whom have we invited to assist in the inquiry? Dr. Lushington, a man who, during his whole life, has been ready to sacrifice political power or pecuniary advantage for the great object of the suppression of the Slave

Trade. This is what we have done with respect to the Right of Search; and the House will have the opportunity of seeing by the official papers what are the grounds on which the government has acquiesced in the proposed inquiry, and what are the qualifications by which that acquiescence was accompanied. Let the House look to the two men appointed to conduct the inquiry—one the minister who signed the treaty giving the Right of Search; and the other, a gentleman well known for the desire he has manifested for the suppression of the Slave Trade; and then I will leave the House to judge how far the ministry has acted with propriety in this matter. If the noble lord dissents from our policy, I hope he will bring forward a motion in express terms reprobating our conduct, and then we shall know whether or not we have the concurrence of the British House of Commons in having undertaken this inquiry. I am not aware that the noble lord adverted to any other fact, excepting that at the concluding part of his speech, he made some observations with respect to our financial and commercial policy. Hon. members are probably all aware that at the meeting of the House this day, a notice was given that I, as the organ of the government would, on an early day, take the opportunity of stating to the House a general outline of the financial and commercial policy of the government. This notice is certainly a departure from the usual course, for it is customary that no communication should be made by the government to the House on this subject until the months of April or May, and until the estimates have been, in great measure, voted. But I thought it would be better, especially when allusion is made in the Queen's Speech to a measure of such importance as the continuance of the Income Tax, not to adhere to established precedents with respect to the period of making a statement of financial policy, but at once to place before the House a general outline of that policy. It being foreseen that alterations are to be made affecting probably, certain branches of commerce, I believe that an early declaration of the policy of the government is by far the wisest course. For these reasons, though there may be some inconvenience in the departure from established rule, yet I would not allow the next week to elapse without a declaration of the general course of the financial policy of the government. I have said that I wish, with respect to the Right of Search, that the noble lord would bring the subject before the House by a distinct motion. I make the same observation with regard to the other matter to which the noble lord has alluded. I wish the noble lord would fairly take the opinion of the House of Commons, as to whether the government have prejudiced the interests, or dishonoured the name of this great nation by coming to an amicable accommodation with France, in respect to the affair of Tahiti. I am most desirous that we should know the feeling of the House of Commons on that subject. The French government is denounced for having made concessions; look to the language in the French Chambers. I will not refer to it in detail, and I will not impute to those eminent men, by whom the language I refer to is used, that it is their desire merely to embarrass the ministry; but when I see men like M. Dupin and Count Molé coming forward and making such declarations as I have indicated; when I see another great man, whom I hold in respect, occupying a high position in his country, and distinguished in literature (M. Thiers), declaring that the French government has dishonoured France by concessions to England—and when I hear also that the English government is said to have dishonoured England by concessions to France, I do see that it is possible to throw obstacles in the way of a cordial understanding between the two countries, by fastening on one concession made by this government as humiliating, and at the same time fastening on the wise policy of the transaction; and I wish the House of Commons to have the opportunity of declaring its opinion as to whether or not the course we have taken in making an accommodation with France be honourable to both parties, and whether or not it was dictated by wisdom, and was consistent with justice? But I will not anticipate the discussion on the affair. As I have before said, it is not correct to say that we boasted of wisdom, and though we took credit for justice and moderation, we at the same time applied the terms to both countries. The House can judge whether the statements made this night on the Queen's Speech, with respect to the condition of trade, of revenue, with respect to the general condition of tranquillity in this country, and the absence of political excitement in Great Britain at least, do not afford indications of that improvement on which her Majesty has felt justified in congratulating the



country. I shall have measures shortly of great importance to propose, and the House will then have the opportunity of determining whether, while the administration of affairs has been conducted by us, the condition of the country has deteriorated, or whether, on the contrary, its condition has been such as to induce the House to continue to us its confidence, without which no government can conduct public affairs, and without which (the noble lord must forgive me for telling him) no government ought to remain in office.

Address agreed to.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT—THE BUDGET.

FEBRUARY 14, 1845.

The House in a Committee of Ways and Means.

SIR ROBERT PEEL said—Mr. Greene, although, Sir, I have had considerable experience in the discharge of official duties, and although I have frequently had occasion to address this House on matters of great public concern, yet I cannot approach the discussion of that subject which I am now called upon to discuss without great anxiety, and without a deep consciousness how imperfect and inadequate will be the explanation which I shall be enabled to give. But, Sir, though I rise under some disadvantage, from the period of the year at which this statement will be made, yet, after the announcement contained in the speech from the throne, that her Majesty's government meant to propose a continuance of the income-tax for a further limited period, we felt that we had no alternative—whatever might be the precedents, and whatever might be the ordinary course as to financial statements—but at the earliest day to submit to the House and the country the general views of her Majesty's government with respect to our financial position and our future commercial policy. Sir, it will be my duty to present to the House a general view of the present financial position of the country; to make an estimate of the probable revenue; and to discuss the great question—whether it be consistent with the public interest that the present amount of expenditure should be retained, or whether it be not fitting that there should be, in respect of some important branches of the public service, an increased vote beyond the expenditure of preceding years. If the House should entertain that proposition for the reasons which I shall adduce, it will then be incumbent on me to propose for the consideration of parliament whether it be fitting that that increased expenditure shall be made from the ordinary sources of revenue, or whether it be more advisable that that tax imposed in the year 1842 on property and income shall be continued for a further limited period, for the double purpose of providing efficiently for the exigencies of the public service, and for enabling parliament to reduce and repeal other taxes bearing more immediately on the industry and commercial enterprise of the community. Sir, I am convinced, on the one hand, that this House will duly appreciate the magnitude of the task which I thus undertake, and that, whatever be its difficulties on account of my inadequacy to contend with them, those difficulties will not be aggravated by any want of patient and indulgent attention on the part of this House; and, Sir, on the other, I shall attempt, on this occasion, to lay before the House as fully and as comprehensively as I can all those considerations which appear to me the proper elements of its future decisions. I shall not enter into any statement or make any observations connected with past party considerations. I shall make no invidious contrasts; nothing shall fall from me to-night which can prevent any gentleman from exercising, in respect to such important matters, a dispassionate judgment, uninfluenced by mere considerations of party. I know I must necessarily touch on topics that have been, and will be again, I doubt not, the subjects of fierce political contention; but I shall postpone that contention to some future period, and I shall to-night, attempt, as I said before, fairly and dispassionately, to lay before the House the present financial position of the country, and explain the views of government in respect to the course of policy we propose to adopt. Sir, I will, in the first instance, begin by referring to that estimate of the finances and expenditure of the country which was made by my right hon. friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he last brought the budget under consideration of parliament. My right hon. friend,

speaking, I think, at the latter end of April, 1844, calculated the revenue for the current year (that is, for the year ending the 5th of April, 1845) at £51,790,000. My right hon. friend calculated the expenditure at £48,643,000 leaving an estimated surplus of £3,147,000. That calculation was disturbed, on the one hand, by a reduction of taxation to the amount of £400,000. I allude to the abolition of the wool duty, and to the duty on glass, remitted at a subsequent period of the session; but then, on the other hand, credit was taken for a demand of £400,000 on account of the expenditure for the expedition to China, which vote it was not necessary to apply; and, therefore, the estimated expenditure of my right hon. friend involved a saving on the one side exactly balancing the reduction of taxation on the other. My right hon. friend stated at the same time that, in consequence of postponing the payment of £769,900 for the purpose of equalizing the payments on dividends reduced, the apparent surplus would be reduced by that amount to a real surplus of £2,376,930. Now, Sir, I have the satisfaction of stating that that surplus, as estimated by my right hon. friend, was, in point of fact (making up the account to the 5th of January), very considerably exceeded. It will appear by the balance sheet, referring to the revenue and expenditure up to the 5th of January, that there was a surplus of £3,357,000. Instead of £51,790,000, the sum calculated upon by my right hon. friend, the amount of net receipt of revenue on the 5th of January was £54,003,000. That increase chiefly arose from the increased receipt of the customs. Instead of £21,500,000, as estimated by my right hon. friend, the actual receipt was, up to the 5th of January, £22,500,000. The excise, which was taken by my right hon. friend at £13,000,000, actually produced £13,308,000. There was some money received under the treaty with China, amounting to £885,000 for which my right hon. friend had not taken credit; and the result was, on the 5th of January last, an actual income of £54,000,000, instead of the estimated income of £51,790,000. The expenditure on the 5th of January, 1845, on account of debt and consolidated fund, amounted to £32,862,000, and on account of the payments then made for the Army and Navy and other public services, £17,784,000, making a total expenditure of £50,646,000, and leaving a surplus, as it appears on that account, amounting to £3,357,000. At the same time, although that is the actual account, as it appears on the 5th of January, yet the House will be naturally anxious to have an estimate of the account as it will probably appear on the 5th of April next. The House will of course recollect that at the period of which I am speaking, I can only submit, in a matter of this kind, an estimate rather than a positive statement; but certainly I have every reason to apprehend that the balance, comparing the probable receipts of revenue within the year, on the 5th of April next, with the probable expenditure, will amount to a sum of above £5,000,000, for the year. That account, to one cursorily reading the papers presented to the House, will appear rather confused, on account of the arrangements which have been necessarily made in the different quarters of the year, for the payment of the public creditor. At one period, if you take the year to end on a particular day of one quarter, the charge for the debt will appear considerably more than the same charge for another year terminating on the same day of another quarter. I will not trouble the House with minute details on this point, but I think it may be safely estimated (and I am ready to lay before the House as exact and complete a statement of our financial condition as I can)—I think, I say, the House may calculate upon our being in possession, on the 5th of April next, of a surplus of revenue received during that year, as compared with the expenditure of, at the very least, £5,000,000. Now, I know, as my right hon. friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, reminds me, that this sum will not appear on the face of the accounts, because, the sum of £2,000,000 has been applied to the payment of Exchequer bills, on account of the opium compensation. I do not wish, however, to deal to-night with the intricacies of accounts. I wish to state to the House what is the real practical position of the finances, severed from all questions of the mode of drawing up the annual accounts; and I think that I am justified in stating that such has been the improvement of the revenue, apart from the property-tax, that the surplus will be as I have stated, viz., a surplus revenue of at least £5,000,000, on the 5th of April next, as compared with the expenditure. A part of that receipt of revenue is made up from temporary and casual sources. I am now speaking of the

actual receipt of revenue within that year. About £885,000 will have been received on account of China money; there are other small sums received from the South Sea Company; and, taking them altogether, perhaps the whole amount received from casual sources will be £500,000, which we cannot speak of as permanent supplies. Of course a portion, and a very considerable portion, of the revenue is derived from the income-tax, which has produced £5,190,000. If it had not been for the receipt of this sum from various casual sources, and the receipt of the sum I have mentioned on account of the income-tax, the revenue, which in that case would be derived from ordinary permanent sources, would not quite equal the expenditure. I think the best course which I can now take is to submit to the House the estimate which has been prepared by my right hon. friend and myself, of the probable receipt of revenue in the next year. I have no right to assume that this House will sanction the continuance of the income-tax, and I think, therefore, it will be better that I should, in the first place, estimate the revenue, supposing the House should determine not to continue the income-tax. We are disposed to estimate the receipt from the customs, in the year ending the 5th of April, 1846 (I am not now speaking of the probable estimate which I before alluded to, and which I shall presently lay before you, up to the 5th of April in the present year, but I am now addressing myself to the prospects of the coming year, from the 5th of April next, to the 5th of April 1846), at £22,500,000. But there has been a very large receipt from the duty on foreign corn this year, and the revenue from customs has also been a very large one, independently of that source, and, perhaps, the experience of past years would induce us not to calculate too confidently, after one very productive year, on the necessary continuance of the equal productiveness of the customs' duties. Making an abatement, therefore, on account of the probability that the corn duty received in the next year will not equal the amount received in the present, and bearing in mind that the last year has been one of a productive customs' revenue, we are not inclined to take the estimate for the coming year at more than £22,000,000. The excise was estimated to produce £13,000,000, and it did produce £13,300,000. We feel ourselves warranted in estimating it at £13,500,000 for the coming year, because, there has been for some time past a progressive increase in the excise revenue, and because it has been found by experience that the excise recovers more slowly from depression than almost any other branch of the revenue. During a period of distress, habits of economy are formed, which after the removal of the pressure continue to operate, and the excise then recovers less rapidly than the customs; but still experience would lead us to suppose that where the improvement has been progressive, it will go on advancing, and that we may be warranted, therefore, in estimating the excise revenue in the coming year at £13,500,000. The Stamps we propose to take at nearly the sum which will be actually produced this year, that is, £7,100,000; the taxes, that is, the land and assessed taxes, we estimate at £4,200,000. The post-office revenue, we feel ourselves warranted, from the increase of it during the last year, and the facilities which have been recently given for an increase of foreign correspondence in estimating (as the probable produce of next year) at £700,000; it has actually produced £690,000, and, therefore, that seems a reasonable estimate. The Crown lands produced £155,000, and we take them at £150,000; the miscellaneous we will take at nearly the same; it actually produced £250,000. I have here been speaking of the ordinary permanent sources of revenue; the total amount of permanent revenue which we estimate for the coming year will be £47,900,000. We calculate that during the coming year we shall receive £600,000 of China money, not receipt, above any demands to be met; and even if the House should refuse its sanction to the continuance of the income-tax, we still shall be entitled to take credit for the receipt of half a year's income-tax, amounting to £2,600,000; and, therefore, on the 5th of April 1846, we shall be enabled to add to the ordinary permanent revenue for that year two sums of £2,600,000, and £600,000, on account of China money, making a total of revenue, even if the income-tax be discontinued, on the 5th of April, 1846, of £51,100,000. I will now state what would be the demand upon that amount of revenue, supposing the estimates which were voted last year were continued at their present amount, and there were no increased demands made of expenditure. The charge for the debt we can of course calculate; the charge for the debt in the year ending the 5th of April,

1846, will be £28,450,000; we shall then have the full advantage of the reduction which took place last year in the interest of the three-and-a-half per cents. The charge for the debt, funded and unfunded, will be next year £28,450,000. The charge on the consolidated fund we take at £2,400,000, making a total of £30,850,000, on account of the debt and fixed charges on the consolidated fund. The estimates voted last year amounted to £17,700,000; the total charge, therefore, assuming the estimates to remain unaltered, would be £48,557,000. Deduct that sum from the total revenue—that is, £48,557,000 from £51,110,000, and there will still be left a surplus, on the 5th of April, 1846, of £2,543,000, assuming our estimate of revenue to be correct. I hope the House will pardon the length of these details; I know not how I can discharge this duty, unless I make this trespass upon its patience by entering into them. If I were to deduct from the revenue of the next year the receipt of the income-tax, and the casual and temporary receipt from China money, and assume that to be the amount of revenue in the following years—that is, the year ending 5th of April, 1847, and assuming the expenditure to remain the same, there would in that case be a small deficiency of revenue as compared with expenditure. Now, Sir, the question is, whether or not we are justified in making a demand for increased expenditure on account of the public service?—and I feel it to be of the utmost importance to attempt to satisfy the House that the demand which we intended to make is a just demand. I do not hesitate to admit that no financial prosperity, no surplus of revenue, relieves a government from the paramount obligation of considering whether, consistently with the public interests, a saving can be made in the public expenditure. There is no more justification for unnecessary and profuse expenditure when your revenue is flourishing, than when your revenue is falling. I am under just as stringent obligations to justify increased demands upon the public purse, when there is a surplus of £5,000,000, as I should be if there were no surplus at all. It is impossible, Sir, for my right hon. friend and myself to have performed that duty which has devolved upon us within the last short period, of reviewing the taxation of this country, of seeing how many taxes there are which it would be most desirable to reduce, if considerations of public weight and public interest permitted, without fully estimating the importance of making every practicable saving in the public expenditure which would permit the continued reduction of taxation. At the same time I am afraid that there is generally prevalent an erroneous conception with respect to the nature of the public expenditure, and the means of making reductions in its amount. It is generally supposed that all that portion of the public expenditure which does not consist of payments to the public creditors is a fund which is available for the purposes of reduction. But that is not the case. If you take the expenditure of the present year, amounting to £48,243,000, you will find that it consists of the following charges:—There is £28,450,000 on account of the payment of interest to the public creditor. The naval and military half-pay, and civil compensations, amount to no less a sum than £4,991,000. The charges actually fixed on the consolidated fund amount to £1,878,000. In those charges are included the provisions for the judicial establishments, as there are included in the amount of £4,991,000 for naval and military half-pay, and civil compensations. There are also the Russian Dutch loan, and various other permanent charges independent of the debt, which have received the sanction of parliament, amounting in the whole to no less a sum than £35,309,000. Deducting that sum from the £48,243,000, which constitutes the total charge of the expenditure, there does not remain more than a sum of £13,000,000 appropriated for the public service in respect to which, so far as the executive government is concerned, reductions can be made. You may say that the charge for naval and military pensions is too high, and ought to have been reduced; but I am now distinguishing the amount of charges due to the public creditor, and which has actually received the sanction of parliament, from that amount of the public charges which depends on the annual estimate, and which is immediately under the control of the executive government, and is annually voted by parliament. The total amount of that sum will not exceed in the present year £12,933,000. Among the other charges which have received the sanction of parliament, is the charge for the civil list. And here I may be permitted to say, that any executive government that would have a due regard to the exercise of a wise and judicious economy, could not do better than follow the example which

has been set them by the control exercised over her own expenditure by the sovereign. A settlement was made of the civil list on her accession to the throne. On the occasion of her marriage no addition was made to that civil list. It has pleased God to bless that marriage by the birth of four children, which has made a considerable additional demand upon the civil list. In the course of last year three sovereigns visited this country; two of them the most powerful sovereigns in the habitable globe—the Emperor of Russia and the King of the French. Those visits, of necessity, created a considerable increase of expenditure; but through that wise system of economy, which is the only source of true magnificence, her Majesty was enabled to meet every charge, and to give a reception to those sovereigns which struck every one by its magnificence, without adding one tittle to the burdens of the country. And I am not required, on the part of her Majesty, to press for the extra expenditure of one single shilling on account of those unforeseen causes of increased expenditure. I think that to state this, is only due to the personal credit of her Majesty, who insists upon it that there shall be every magnificence required by her station, but without incurring a single debt. I know it may be said that I have not adverted to other sources of reduction in the public expenditure. It may be said that offices might be abolished, and that emoluments might be reduced. I admit that no office ought to be retained which is not necessary for the public service. I admit that no emolument attached to any office ought to be retained which is not necessary to secure the faithful and efficient performance of the duties necessary for the public service. On that principle we are entirely agreed. I vindicate no sinecures, and when an office becomes vacant, we go through that process which has been so frequently recommended, of considering if the retention of it is necessary for the public service, and if the emoluments will admit of reduction consistently with a due regard for the public interests. Now, with regard to the charges for the collection of the revenue, it should be borne in mind that the extent of the revenue establishment is not merely to secure an efficient collection of the money due to the state, but that it is of the utmost importance that every facility should be given for the transaction of commercial business. It is our duty to reduce those establishments, as far as it is consistent with public convenience. I do not vindicate the retention of one single useless officer; but the public is interested in giving to the despatch of public business every facility that can be given consistently with a due regard to economy, and, therefore, so far as the principle is concerned that the revenue ought to be collected at the least possible expense, and that you ought to make every reduction you can, upon that point I apprehend there can be no difference of opinion. But, still, after that admission, you will find that the subject has constantly occupied the attention of every government, and that great reductions from time to time have been made. But it would be a delusion and a fallacy to expect that you can materially reduce the public burdens by any diminution of the salaries of the persons employed. At the same time it might be said that those great public establishments for which a vote is taken every year, and which constitute the main charge on the revenue, independent of the fixed charges—such as the army, the navy, and the ordnance of the country—may admit of some reductions. I, first of all, will state the estimate we propose for the expenditure on account of the army. Now it is impossible to determine whether that expense be justifiable or not without adverting to the extent of the colonial empire of this country. In point of fact, the main expense on account of the army is caused by the extent of your colonial possessions. You have these colonial dependencies, and to make no provision for the relief of the troops serving in them would be inconsistent with humanity in the first place, and inconsistent with prudence in the second. Apart from all considerations of humanity, in point of economy nothing can be more precious than the life and health of a soldier. The army that you are thus obliged to possess is a very expensive and complicated machine, and you may depend upon it you will not consult true economy if you permit it to be dislocated and deranged by attempts at reduction without the calculation of consequences. Now, in the year 1792, which has frequently been referred to as the criterion of what our military establishments ought to be—in the year 1792 you had 22 colonial dependencies; in the year 1820 you had 34 colonial dependencies; and in the present year, 1845, the colonies, which were 22 in 1792, have increased to 45. It is the number of your colonies, and the dis-

pension of forces employed in them, that leads to the necessity of frequent relief, and imposes on you, with reference to your army particularly, as distinguished from the armies of the continental powers, in order to maintain the efficiency of that force, a considerable annual expenditure. It may be said that it was unwise thus to extend our colonial empire; but I deal with the fact that you have colonies—that having them you must provide a competent force for each, and that having a competent force, you must have an adequate and sound system for relieving the soldiers in them. Sir, I should be unwilling, though I know our colonies are expensive, and I know they are numerous—I should be unwilling to give up that policy which laid the foundation in different parts of the globe of dependencies animated by the spirit of Englishmen, speaking the English language, and laying the foundation, perhaps, in future times, of free, populous, and commercial states. Looking to our own population, looking to its numbers, looking to its enterprise, I cannot say that I think it is unwise to provide an outlet for that population, and a wide field for that enterprise. Be that as it may, though it may be attended at times with some considerable expense, you must remember the fact that you have at the present moment forty-five colonies for the military defence of which you must provide. For the service of these forty-five colonies you have a force, consisting, first, of three battalions of guards; of 6,500 cavalry, rank and file; and you have 112 battalions of infantry, consisting, rank and file, of 92,500 men; that is the amount of the British army with which you are to garrison all these forty-five colonies, with which we are to provide against occasional internal commotion, and the chance of foreign attack, and to provide also for the service of the country at home. And this is to be effected, and is effected, by an infantry force of 112 battalions, amounting to 92,500 rank and file. Now, what is the rule established with regard to the relief of the soldiers? The rule is this. That a regiment shall remain ten years abroad, and five at home; and I think no one will say that that is an unreasonable regulation, or that it would not be desirable, for the efficiency of the army, that every regiment in the British service should, if reliefs could be regularly afforded, not remain more than ten years abroad, and that it should have the advantage of remaining five years at home. After the return of a regiment it generally arrives in such a state that it requires a year to bring it into an efficient condition. Nevertheless, if her Majesty's government thought it consistent with true economy, with humanity, and with the efficiency of the service to reduce the military force, it would be their bounden duty to recommend the reduction. But what is the fact with regard to the service of regiments abroad? Of the 112 battalions of infantry in the British service, there are now twenty-three in India, fifty are serving in the colonies, and four are on their passage, making in all seventy-seven battalions actually employed in the defence of your colonial empire. You have thirty-five battalions at home—not, as it is supposed for the purpose of restraining the population, but for the purpose—and you effect it incompletely—of maintaining the system of relief for your regiments serving abroad. Your rule is, five years at home, but ten years abroad; but you have not been able to adhere to it. The military force that you have at home does not enable you to supply the demands of what you describe as a necessary relief. Now let me take a series of years, from the year 1824 to the year 1842, a period of eighteen years of profound peace—at least there was during that period no general warfare, though there were occasional interruptions to tranquillity—from 1824 to 1842, and the number of battalions during that time has remained the same, namely, 112. Now, what was the foreign service during that period the average service of the whole of the battalions—was it ten years abroad and five at home? For the whole of the battalions during those eighteen years, the colonial service was fourteen years, and only four at home. It may be said that I speak of rank and file, and that there is necessarily a number of officers included. Now, look at the effect of attempting to reduce the number of officers. You had a reduced establishment of officers in India, and what did you hear from Sir C. Napier? He said at once, you have so reduced your number of officers, that you are endangering the efficiency of your regiments, and we were obliged to increase the number of officers in consequence of his representations. What is the fact with respect to the service in India at the present moment? There are twenty-three battalions in India, twelve of them whose period of foreign service

has been upwards of thirteen years; there are four battalions in India whose period of service has been upwards of twenty years; and there is one battalion in India which has been on foreign service for twenty-three years, which is now returning home; and if it be allowed to remain five years at home, and then be sent out again for ten years, when it comes back at the end of the ten years, it will have been thirty-three years abroad on foreign service, and five at home. Now, if you adhere to your own rule of five years at home and ten years abroad, you would require no less than forty-seven battalions at home. If you said that regiments in Australia and India should serve ten years, you would require ten additional battalions at home to give them the proper relief. Independently of the *depôt* companies, we have only thirty-five battalions at home; and I ask the House whether her Majesty's government would be acting consistently with their duty if, after the facts which I have stated, they recommended a diminution of the British Army? I know, Sir, that some temporary popularity might be gained by advising that reduction; but when I look to the system of relief, however imperfectly those principles upon which it is founded, with the present force at home, are carried into effect, I am bound to say, that I do not think it would be consistent with sound policy, or with economy, to propose—while you retain your vast Colonial empire—a reduction in the military establishments of the country. I hope the House will excuse me for dwelling thus in detail upon our expenditure, because, as I said before, I feel that no financial prosperity can justify any increase in the expenditure which can be avoided. We propose no increase in our military establishments; but, at the same time, we do not think it could be desirable to recommend to the House to diminish the military force of this country. Consequently, we propose that the vote for the army estimates in the present year, shall be a vote of £6,600,000, the same as the last year's estimate. I now proceed to call the attention of the House to the state of the navy, and the demand we shall feel it our duty to submit to the House for an increase in the naval estimates. We shall propose, in the course of the present year, an increase in the number of men serving in the navy, of about 2,500 more than those that are now actually employed, and of about 4,000 more men than those voted last year. We shall make that proposal on the following grounds:—that on account of our extended colonial empire, and the new commercial interests connected with it, there is a growing necessity for protection of our commerce in almost every part of the world. Within the last few years three great naval stations have grown up in distant parts of the globe. There is one on the coast of Africa, one in the Pacific, and one in the China seas. Now I will just compare the number of men employed in these several stations in 1841, with the number of men we felt it our duty to employ; for, really we had scarcely any option to exercise with respect to that employment in the course of the autumn of last year. In 1841, on the coast of Africa there were employed 690 men. Last year, for the purpose of making a more vigorous attempt for the suppression of the slave trade, there were employed on the coast of Africa 2,590 men. In the Pacific, in the year 1841, there were employed 760 men; in the last year there were, and there are at present, employed, 2,437 men. In the China seas, in 1841, there was only a small frigate. I believe that was previous to the commencement of hostilities; but our ordinary relations with China were conducted by the occasional presence of a small frigate. But at the present time, in consequence of the treaty which we entered into with China, there are employed on the coast of China 2,105 men. We have attempted to reduce the number. In the China treaty, however, there is a stipulation that we should have one vessel off each of the five ports at which our commerce was to be carried on. We attempted to reduce the number. We tried to adopt the plan of having a steam-boat to pay occasional visits to those ports. But we were immediately met by the strongest representations from the most eminent authorities—from Sir Henry Pottinger, and his successor, Mr. Davis—earnestly entreating us, in consideration of the new state of things, our new relations, and of the importance of imposing a check upon those who frequented these ports, and preventing any infraction of the Chinese laws, immediately to despatch an additional force; and so convinced were we of the justness of the representations thus made to us, that we at once acceded to the demand of Sir Henry Pottinger and Mr. Davis, and despatched an additional force to the China seas. Now comparing, in these three stations, the number of men employed in 1841 with that employed at

present, there is an actual increase in the number employed now of about 6,000 men on those stations. It would not be proper to go into more minute details; but the House will recollect what took place in the course of the last year—the complaints made that we had not a sufficient force at this island or that; and if I had the opportunity, I certainly believe that I could convince every dispassionate mind that we could not with safety or wisdom reduce the force that we now have either in China or the Pacific. Not, indeed, that an increase is wanted for any purpose of war or oppression; but our commerce is greatly extending on the west coast of South America, and it is impossible to deny that the presence of a British vessel has very great effect in maintaining relations of peace. I am sure that upon those three stations alone there has been an increase in the men employed at a distance from this country of not less than 6,000. You must observe, too, that the very dispersion of your naval force has an effect like that produced by the dispersion of the army. The necessity of having your naval force dispersed over the habitable globe, does in fact diminish the efficiency of the naval force at home. We purpose, therefore, with perfect confidence in the justice of the requisition, to increase the naval force for the present year by 4000 men. Now, the charge for the expenditure caused by that increase will be £184,000. And here let me add, that I do not intend this increase merely upon the ground of protection to our distant possessions. For I do say without hesitation, that I think it is of great importance that this country should have the means of perfecting discipline, of improving its officers, and of having ready at its command a certain number of ships of the line. I do not believe that it ought to give, or that it would give, any cause for jealousy, if this country should have at its command a fleet of nine or ten sail of the line. It is of great importance that opportunity should be given for our vessels to act together—it is of great importance that we should have the opportunity of testing the sailing and other qualities of vessels, and we have no means of doing so efficiently, unless we are enabled to send them to sea. But, Sir, I am afraid that the approbation of the gallant officer opposite (Sir C. Napier) will be neutralised by the disapprobation of some hon. gentlemen who sit behind him, and who may not be so convinced of the policy of this increased expenditure as the hon. and gallant gentleman himself. We do not, Sir, propose this increase under any apprehension of war; we do not propose it with any view whatever to aggression, but in the conviction that it is proper and politic that this country should have at its command a few line of battle ships to place where she will. The increase of the number of men by 4,000 will not enable you if you attend to the requisition for the protection of your commerce in distant parts of the globe, to have more than ten sail of the line. Sir, it is also impossible, I think, for this House to overlook the progress which is now making in improving steam navigation. Last year this House sanctioned a vote for two basins for the construction and repair of steam-vessels—one at Portsmouth and another at Devonport. We shall, therefore, propose to take a vote in the present year for proceeding with the formation of those basins which received the sanction of the House last year. The vote I propose to ask for is, 187,000. We shall also take a vote for the purpose of enabling us to maintain the steam navy of this country. I shall propose, I say, a vote to give us the means of constructing vessels which shall keep up in this country a respectable steam navy suited to a peace establishment. Now, Sir, on account of the services connected with the Navy, and of the ordnance in immediate subordination to the Navy, there will be this year an increase in the estimates of nearly £1000,000. The estimate which I will now present to the House is for the total expenditure for the year ending April 1846. The charge for the debt is £28,395,000, for the fixed charges on the consolidated fund £2,400,000, being a total of £30,795,000. The vote of supply for the Army is £6,678,000, for the Navy £6,936,000, for the ordnance £2,142,000, for the miscellaneous estimates £3,200,000, being together £18,956,000, and added to the charge for the debt, and for the fixed charges on the consolidated fund £49,690,000. For the revenue of the next year I will take £51,100,000. The charges for the present year, £49,690,000. For this increased expenditure, the revenue for next year, even if the House did not determine upon the continuance of the property tax, would provide. That revenue as I have said, will amount to £51,100,000, and the charge anticipated being £49,690,000, on the 5th April, 1846, there would still be a surplus of revenue with the half-year's



property tax which is yet to be received. I am not now estimating the permanent revenue and expenditure of the country. I am stating what will be the state of our finances on the 5th April 1846, with the proposed increase of expenditure. It is quite clear that if this expenditure were to be continued, and if the income tax was not to be renewed, unless there were to be some considerable increase in the public revenue from other sources, there would probably be a deficiency in the years following. I have thus attempted to lay before the House the present financial condition of the country; I have estimated the revenue to the 5th April next, and also for the year ending the 5th of April 1846; and I have also laid before the House what will be the amount of expenditure her Majesty's government, with a provident care for the public interests, will feel it to be their duty to recommend to the House. The next question that arises is—and it is a most important one—in what manner this increase of expenditure is to be provided for? Will you run the risk of entailing a deficiency in future years, by making no provision for the time to come, and seeing that in 1846 the revenue will be sufficient to meet increased expenditure, will you postpone the consideration of what will be fitting to do until that year shall have expired? Her Majesty's government do not consider that that would be a prudent course, or that they would be doing their duty by acting without regard to the future condition of the country. I know it does not conduce to popularity to make a proposition for increased or for continued taxation; but it is the duty of a government to consider the prospects of the future as well as the present exigencies of the country, and if they are satisfied that the public interest demands a continuance of taxation, even though it may be unpopular, it becomes their duty respectfully to submit to this House the consideration of a proposal on that important subject. We are convinced that it is our duty to propose a continuance of the property tax for a further period; and before I am led to ask the assent of this House, or any gentleman in this House, to that proposal, I feel it is absolutely necessary that I should explain, as I shall now proceed to do, what are the views of her Majesty's government with respect to the appropriation of the surplus revenue which will be placed at their disposal after fully providing for every exigency of the public service. I know well, as the noble lord opposite stated the other night, that it is impossible to give an opinion upon the question, abstractedly, can the property tax be continued or not? without knowing what are the measures in respect of relief from taxation which would follow as a consequence of its continued imposition. Let me assume for the present—and I merely assume it for the purpose of argument and to make my statement more clear—let me assume, I repeat, for the present, that the House has granted the continuance of the property tax. I will then give a short estimate of the revenue arising from it, together with other sources. Suppose, then, the property tax to be continued, the estimate of the revenue for the next year, on the 5th of April, 1846, aided by the £5,200,000 of the property tax for the whole year, would be £53,700,000; and as long as the other sources of the revenue remain equally productive, and as long as the property tax is continued, £53,700,000, subject to a reduction of £600,000, will be the amount of the revenue. This £600,000 is the amount received as China money; it will be continued next year; but as that is merely a temporary addition, I think it is better, for the purpose of calculating the revenue to strike it out altogether. The revenue for the year, then, on the 5th of April, 1846, assuming the property tax to be continued, deducting this sum of £600,000, will be £53,100,000. The charge for the debt, and on account of the different branches of public service, will be £49,690,000; so that there will be left, on the 5th of April, 1846, and in successive years as long as the income tax continues, and the other sources of revenue remain equally productive, a net surplus of £3,409,000. That is the surplus that will remain if the House should acquiesce in the proposal which I shall make to increase the expenditure on the Navy, and shall also determine that the income-tax shall be continued. I now, Sir, approach that most important part of my statement I have this night to make, namely, what is the mode in which that surplus, or any part of that surplus, shall be applied for the relief of taxation? What are the inducements, apart from that of proving effectually for the public service, which I can hold out to the House of Commons as a motive to obtain their consent to the continuance of the income tax? I should not have proposed to the House the continuance

of the income tax unless I had the strongest persuasion, partly founded on the experience of the last three years, that it will be competent to the House of Commons, by continuing the income tax, to make such arrangements with respect to general taxation as shall be the foundation of great commercial prosperity, and shall materially add to the comforts even of those who are called on to contribute to the income tax. When the question is, having a large surplus, to determine how that surplus can be most efficiently employed, the subject becomes worthy of the most important and serious consideration. In the first place you have to consider the claims which may be urged in favour of a reduction of taxation on account of the heaviness with which certain imposts press on articles of general consumption. You are bound also to consider what taxes press on the raw materials which constitute the staple of the manufactures of the country. You are also bound to consider what taxes cause a great increase in the establishments necessary for their collection, and what are those taxes the remission of which will enable us to diminish those establishments, so as to reduce the expense of collection. We are bound also to consider what are those taxes, the removal of which will give more scope to commercial enterprise, and occasion an increased demand for labour. I will not say which of these considerations ought to be the most predominant—all ought to occupy our serious attention, for all are of the very greatest importance. If we receive the sanction of the House for the continuance of the income-tax, we shall feel it to be our duty to make a great experiment with respect to taxation, and we shall hope that the general prosperity which will result therefrom will contribute to fill up the void caused by the cessation of the income-tax in future years. We do not propose to maintain any material surplus of revenue over expenditure, confident that, whatever may happen, this House is determined to maintain the public credit. We have determined to recommend extensive reductions in those taxes which, in our opinion, press more onerously on the community than the income-tax. I first propose to take those taxes which are collected by the customs board, and I shall submit to the consideration of the House on that point, what are the views of her Majesty's government in respect to a reduction in the duty on sugar. The House will recollect that upon this subject an arrangement, temporary in its character, was made in the course of last year, by which sugar, the produce of countries where the article was cultivated by means of free labour, was admitted into competition with sugar, the produce of our colonies. There was at that time no reduction proposed in duty on the produce of our own colonies; but propositions were made regarding the importation of free labour sugar, which I think were generally considered as indicative of an intention on the part of her Majesty's government, in the course of the present session, to call the attention of the House to the sugar duties, and to propose a reduction in them. The amount of discriminating duties proposed upon sugar, the produce of countries where sugar is cultivated by free labour, was 10s. 6d. Sir, we propose now to adhere to the general principle upon which we acted in the course of last year. We propose to restrict the competition of sugar, the produce of our own colonies, to sugar which is the produce of countries cultivating it by means of free labour, or which are entitled to the admission of their sugar into this country under reciprocity treaties which already exist. [An hon. member made some observation, which was inaudible.] I beg it may be distinctly understood that I do not wish to provoke any discussion on this subject now. All debate upon it had better be deferred to the time when the question of the sugar duties is regularly before the House. At the same time it is important, indeed necessary, that I should make a general allusion to the subject in the statement I am now making. The discriminating duty proposed to be established by the act of last session was, on free labour British plantation sugar, 24s., and 5 per cent., and that upon free labour foreign sugar, 34s., and 5 per cent.; making upon the former, a total amount of duty of 25s. 3d., and on the latter of 35s. 9d. But, in the course of the discussion last year, it was proposed, as a just protection, to establish a higher discriminating rate of duty on free labour foreign sugar that was clayed or equivalent to clayed. We declined, however, to accede to that proposal, as we found that there was no such rule established with respect to this sugar the produce of our own colonies, but that there was a uniform rate with respect to all our sugars, except refined sugar; and we were unwilling to establish a different rule with regard to the different

qualities of sugar from other countries. We stated, at the same time, that if it were possible to establish a classification applying to our own as well as to foreign sugars, the subject might be well worthy of consideration, and it might be a proper arrangement to make. Some hon. gentlemen who spoke on the other side of the House endeavoured to establish the policy of a distinction between the coarser and the finer kinds of sugar. We have since that period had communication with officers conversant with the details of the matter, and it has been certified to us that it is possible, both with respect to our own and foreign sugars, to establish such a distinction. We propose, therefore, with respect to all sugars, except refined, the produce of our own colonies, to make this arrangement of the duties:—In respect to brown Muscovado sugar, now subject to a duty of 25s. 3d., we propose to make a reduction of 11s. 3d., and to reduce the duty to 14s. With regard to Muscovado sugar, that reduced duty will apply to all British plantation sugar—to sugar the produce of the Mauritius—to sugar the produce of our West Indian colonies; but with regard to the produce of certain districts in British India, to which a different rule now applies—I allude to those districts which are permitted to import foreign sugars—and with regard to those districts we propose to retain the same relative proportionate duty, and that duty in respect to Muscovado sugar coming from them shall be 18s. 8d. We propose that the amount of protective duty shall not exceed 9s. 4d., and the duty on free labour foreign Muscovado sugar will, therefore, be 23s. 4d. [An hon. member: What will be the case under a reciprocity treaty?] Of course, as to countries with which reciprocity treaties are in force, we cannot deprive them of that which is their right under these treaties. With regard to white or clayed sugar, or sugar which by some process is made equal to clayed sugar, we propose that the duty on British plantation or East India sugar shall be reduced from 25s. 3d. to 16s. 4d., and that the duty on sugar imported from those parts of India into which foreign sugar may be imported, shall be 21s. 9d., and that the duty on free labour foreign sugar—that is, clayed, or sugar equal to clayed, shall be 28s., thus retaining the whole amount of discriminating duty which last year was 10s. 6d., but applying it in a different manner, giving 9s. 4d. protection on Muscovado sugar, and increasing the protection to 11s. 4d. on the more valuable and costly article of clayed or white sugar. The average amount of discriminating duty, therefore, will remain the same as it was last year. The duty on molasses we propose to reduce and preserve in the same proportion. It is necessary that I should make the intentions of the government well understood; but at the same time, without going into minute details, reserving all those for consideration when the sugar duties come under the attention of the House, we propose to make a further reduction with respect to the admission of refined sugar. We propose to remove the prohibitory duty on refined sugar, imported from those British possessions which are entitled to import Muscovado sugar at 14s. duty, and to place upon such sugar a proportionate import duty—viz., on refined sugar 18s. 8d., and 21s. on double refined, the 14s. including the 5 per cent. Now, it is important that I should give to the House the best estimate I can form of the probable amount of sugar to be derived from the possessions of this country abroad. For the purpose of obtaining information on that subject we have applied to four independent sources, with the view of obtaining an estimate of the probable supply of sugar from British possessions for the next year, and I will now read to the House, with its permission, the estimates that have been formed. The stock of sugar on hand on the 1st of January last was 45,000 tons, and the estimate made by the customs of the probable production of the British plantations is as follows:—From the West India colonies, 135,000 tons; from the Mauritius, 40,000 tons; and from British India, 70,000 tons, being the supply of sugar for the present year, independent of the stock on hand, of 245,000 tons. I trust that there may be reliance placed on the accuracy of this estimate, as it has been procured from the best sources of information. The next of the authorities which we have consulted calculated the produce of the British plantations at 140,000 tons, the Mauritius at 40,000, and British India at 70,000, making a total of 250,000 tons of sugar to be supplied during the next year. The next authority we consulted has not given so flattering an account. It estimated the produce of British plantation sugar at only 120,000 tons, the Mauritius at 40,000 tons, and British India at 70,000 tons—making an estimate of 230,000 tons. The

fourth estimate formed independently, as I said before, of any communication with the authorities for the other estimates, is this. The estimate for British plantation sugar is 130,000 tons, the Mauritius 40,000 tons, British India 65,000—making a total of 235,000 tons. The lowest of those estimates is 230,000 tons, and the highest is 250,000 tons. If you add the highest to the stock in hand, that gives a supply of 295,000 tons; and if you take the lowest, it will give a supply of 275,000 tons. We consider that the effect of the reduction of duty upon sugar will be, on the whole, a reduction of price, so far as duty enters into price, and will amount to  $1\frac{1}{2}d.$  per lb., or not quite so much as  $1\frac{1}{2}d.$  But if you add other charges that accompany a high rate of duty, we think the full effect of the reduction of the duty will be not much short of  $1\frac{1}{2}d.$  per lb.; because, as the duty increases, there are charges incidental to that increase, which also increase. I next propose to give to the House the best estimate we can form as to the probable loss to the revenue which will arise from that proposed reduction. As I said before, we calculate, independent of any supply of free-labour sugar—we calculate on a supply, including the stock in hand, of at least 275,000 tons for the present year. The greatest amount of consumption, I believe, has not been more than 207,200 tons in any one year. We think it is probable that the effect of the reduction of the duty may lead to an increased consumption of perhaps 43,000 tons. (Of course these estimates must be taken as very general; but it appears to us probable that the increased consumption of sugar, consequent upon the reduction of duty, will amount to a total not much short of 250,000 tons. The consumption of British Muscovado sugar to the extent of 160,000 tons, at  $14s.$ , would give £2,240,000. The consumption of clayed sugar at a duty of  $16s. 4d.$  on sugar equal to clayed, to the extent of 70,000 tons, will give a revenue of £1,140,000; foreign free Muscovado sugar, 5,000 tons, at  $23s. 4d.$ , will give a revenue of £116,700; of free-labour foreign clayed, or equal to clayed, 15,000 tons, at  $28s.$ , will give a revenue of £420,000. As I said before, these estimates must of course be very general; but supposing them to approximate to the truth, the consequence will be that we shall receive from the duty on sugar, in consequence of the reduction, the sum of £3,916,000. The revenue derived from sugar in the last year was £5,216,000. There will consequently be very probably a loss in the next year to the revenue of very nearly £1,300,000 upon sugar. Now, postponing any further discussion on the subject of the sugar duties, until the period when they will come immediately under consideration, I proceed to enumerate the other duties, of which we shall propose, as a consequence of the continuance of the income-tax, the reduction or the remission. It will be recollected that, when the tariff passed, in the year 1842, there were some small duties still retained upon exports from this country—exports either of raw materials, or manufactured articles so nearly approaching raw materials, that they could scarcely be distinguished from them. At the same time, it will be remembered that we abolished generally the duties on exports, which yielded, I think, about £108,000. They were all abolished with the exception of a few articles, such for instance as, I think, china-stone, and some others of the same description. We propose to adopt, as a general rule, the abolition of export duties on all articles. [An hon. member: Including coal?] Not excepting coal. I am indifferent to any temporary triumph. I and my right hon. friends will do what we conceive to be our duty, without regard to whether we may please or displease particular persons. We shall be actuated by other and higher considerations. Applying, then, a general principle to exports of every kind, we do not think it would be wise to reserve coal as an exception. We do think it will be an important principle to establish, that with respect to exports there shall be no duty leviable; and, in establishing that principle, we agree that coal should be included in it. We are the more willing to act up to the full extent of the principle, inasmuch as the amount of revenue derived from coal has not met the expectation which was entertained when the tax was first imposed. The calculation of the amount to be received was £160,000 as a clear net revenue, whereas the sum received last year from the duty on coal, did not exceed £120,000. I believe that the export of coal has been greatly impeded, in consequence of the combinations which have taken place amongst the colliers and the owners of coal mines. These I consider to have been the main cause why the revenue derived from the exportation of coal, has not amounted to more than the sum I have named. But I do not take as the ground of the exemp-

tion of coals the fact of the revenue not having amounted to the estimate. I do it from an unwillingness to make any exception to the principle which I have already enunciated—namely, that with respect to exports no duty shall henceforth survive. But this I must say, that, after having removed the burden to which coal on its export to foreign countries is now subject, I do trust that the proprietors of coal mines will give to the people of this country the full advantage of that remission. There is an impression—I know not whether it be well founded or not—but there is a general impression that the price demanded for coal sent to the metropolis, and to other parts of the country, is higher than the price of coal exported to foreign countries. If that be so, there could not be a more powerful justification of this export duty than the fact, that by means of combination a greater price was demanded from the subjects of her Majesty for English coal, than from the subjects of foreign powers. I must also think that it is a great abuse of natural monopoly, if there be combinations among coal-mine proprietors for the purpose of restricting the supply and enhancing the price of coal in this country. And I trust that this voluntary abandonment on the part of her Majesty's government, of a tax so much complained of by the coal proprietors, will be met by that body in a corresponding spirit, and that we shall hear no longer of two prices for coal—one for foreigners and another for Englishmen, and that we shall hear no more of combinations among proprietors of coal property for the purpose of restricting the supply, and dividing the amount of that supply among themselves. So much, Sir, for the duties upon exports. [An hon. member: What was the total amount of the coal duty received by the government?] The total amount of duty on the exportation of coal does not exceed £118,000; and the revenue on the other articles exported is very small indeed. The loss which the revenue will sustain by the repeal of the coal duties, taking last year's receipts as a test, will, as I have just stated, be about £118,000. I now come to the duties which are levied on imports, and which, in amount, are very small on individual articles which are used as raw materials in our manufactures. I dare say, most gentlemen have referred to the paper which has been prepared by direction of the government for the purpose of exemplifying the operation of the present system of import taxation, and of the late changes in the tariff. It may probably have been observed that by that document there are no less than 813 articles included in the tariff, 430 of which produce a very small amount of revenue indeed. We propose, Sir, to include in our financial arrangements the abolition of the duties which are now levied on those 430 articles. But in considering the policy of altering these duties, a material question arises; namely, whether it be desirable to abolish the duty altogether, or whether it be desirable to retain a small and merely nominal amount of duty for the purpose of detecting imposition, and of securing the acquisition of useful information. We have given a good deal of consideration to that subject: it is a difficult one, and deserves much reflection. It will be absolutely necessary, in any event, to retain important means of inquiry with respect to the importation of foreign articles; first, for the purpose of obtaining accurate statistical information. To secure this, it is necessary to ascertain the weight and quantity of the articles imported. In the next place, it is absolutely necessary to retain the power of strict examination, because, of course, we must guard against the possibility of fraud by articles, on which duty is leviable, coming into this country under the pretence that they are articles on which no duty is chargeable. But, upon the whole, we have arrived at the conclusion, while retaining the power of examination, and while retaining the power of ascertaining the quantity and the weight of the articles imported, that it is desirable in making a great reform of this kind, in respect to the receipt of these small duties, that we should abolish them altogether, rather than retain any portion of them. By retaining a small portion of such duties, it may be said that we should increase the vigilance of the custom-house officers, in ascertaining the weight and quantity of articles imported. But if such duties were, as they ought to be, merely nominal, it does not occur to me that the collection of a merely nominal duty would give such an incitement to custom-house officers as that which a duty of considerable amount might excite. But, observe, by abolishing the duties altogether, we get rid of a great number of troublesome accounts which must be kept if any duties whatever are to be levied. If fraud be practised—if on examination it be found that the law is not strictly obeyed or openly evaded—we must then

appeal to the House for the purpose of establishing precautionary measures, and for re-establishing a small and nominal duty. But we are willing to try the experiment of abolishing the duties altogether, retaining the power of examination as to the weight and quantity of the articles, so that statistical information shall be secured, and precaution taken against the import duty being evaded on articles still liable to duty, under the pretence that those articles are free of duty. Now, we apprehend that the repeal of these duties will be of great advantage to the trade of this country. Observe, it dispenses with the necessity of warehousing these small goods, a practice which prevails throughout the country, though I believe it is more extensively observed in the City of London with respect to goods on which small duties are levied, than in other parts of the country. Yet even in other towns and cities the removal of a temptation to warehouse such goods, will be a great advantage. Upon the whole, therefore, not being very confident of the perfect correctness of our decision, yet we do feel it our duty to advise the House to try the experiment which we did try last year with respect to foreign wool, and admit the importation of those articles to which I shall presently refer without the payment of any duty, being assured that if necessary, the House will re-establish such an amount of duty, not for the purpose of raising a revenue, as shall be considered sufficient to guard against fraud. The articles on which we propose to abolish the duties, will be those generally which are the raw materials of our manufactures. The list of these articles contains 430 specific items; and, as that list will be printed, I do not think it necessary to make such a trespass on the patience of the House as to read over the whole of them. I think it, therefore, better to postpone the minute consideration of those articles till another opportunity; but I may state that the total number of articles that will be absolutely swept away from the tariff, will be no less than 430. These will include those fibrous materials, such as silk, hemp, and flax, which now pay a nominal duty; yarns of different kinds, with the exception of worsted yarns, which are subject to some peculiar regulations. We also propose to abolish the duty on furniture woods. There is a great trade growing up in this country, which it is very desirable to promote; and for that purpose I propose abolishing the duty on all cabinet-making materials. The amount of duty at present levied on cabinet woods is very low, and we think that the same principle which has already been applied to sheep's wool, ought to be applied to those materials. We propose, also, to abolish the duties on animal and vegetable oils. These were included in the tariff. We propose likewise to remove the duty upon ores and minerals, with the exception of copper ore, with respect to which an arrangement was made in 1842, and which has worked exceedingly well. The duties on iron and zinc, in the first stages of manufacture, will also be abolished; and we intend to remove the duties on all dye-stuffs, and on drugs universally, with the exception of some that are very noxious, and liable to be used as adulterations. There are some other articles with respect to which, partly from this and partly from other considerations; this total removal of duty will not take place. I do not propose materially to interfere with the general principles which we have applied to the timber duties. We were charged with throwing away a large sum by our alteration of the timber duties; but with regard to the great article of foreign timber, I think it will be seen that there has been recently a large increase in the import of Baltic timber—that import is increasing, and although as yet the measure lately passed has not had a fair opportunity of showing its results, I have a very confident hope that eventually my estimate of last year will be realised. The amount received for timber duties during the course of last year did not fall much short of £950,000. But there is one particular article, standing on very special grounds, in respect to which, when speaking of timber duties, we think an exception ought to be made: I allude to the article of staves. We have given the most deliberate consideration to this subject; we have read the various memorials which have been presented to us on behalf of the coopers of this country, and we do think that they have made out a case of peculiar hardship, which entitles them to an exemption from the duty on an article which is, in point of fact, the raw material of their manufacture. The cooperage trade has been gradually decaying in this country. Even in our own possessions, the export of staves and the articles that are made from them, is exposed to a formidable competition on the part of the United States. The United States are now supplying our West-

India Colonies with this important article of trade. The trade of the cooper again, in consequence of the failure in our fisheries, has fallen off materially. The amount of duty levied on staves this year for the purpose of manufacture, is not less than 30 per cent. on the value of the raw material, as it may properly be termed. We have considered whether it would be possible to adopt any mode of relief, at the same time retaining the revenue duty; but it appeared to us that this plan must give rise to such a system of fraud, and that it would afford such opportunities for evasion, that we thought it better on the whole to class the article of staves with those that are raw material, and permit a free and unrestricted import of staves for the use of the coopers. Of course it will be necessary that we should limit the length of the staves, so that they may not be applied to other purposes; but without very minute and vexatious regulations, it will be impossible to prevent the importation of staves altogether which may be used for other purposes, though not contemplated by the law, than for cooperage. Upon the whole, however, we think it better to submit to that evasion of our intention, rather than establish a vexatious system of minute regulations for the purpose of preventing it. I do hope that the removal of this duty will restore the prosperity of a trade which finds employment for some of the most ingenious and respectable artizans in this country; and that the House will consider that we are perfectly justified in taking this one article out of the general category of the timber duties. [Mr. Labouchere: Do you remove the duty altogether?] Yes, we take it off altogether. [Mr. Labouchere: What is the amount?] The amount of duty on this article, I think, is about £33,000. We remit it altogether. We diminish the temptation to apply staves to the ordinary purposes of furniture, by making a simultaneous reduction in the duty upon all cabinet timber. [Mr. Labouchere: What is the estimated loss to the revenue?] I think the loss of revenue by the remission of the duties on all these 430 articles will be about £320,000. I now come to that article, which of all others is the most important to the manufacturing and commercial prosperity of this country. I come now to the duty upon cotton wool. The present duty on cotton wool is, so far as the revenue is concerned, 5-16ths of 1d. the pound weight; but as that duty is applicable to the whole amount of cotton wool imported, and as about one-fifth of the total amount of cotton wool is unavailable for the purposes of manufacture, and is necessarily waste, the duty, of course, presses with increased severity upon that portion of the whole amount which is capable of being used for manufactures. It is estimated, and I believe the estimate to be a reasonable one, that we ought to add one-sixteenth more to the five-sixteenths, in order to calculate the full amount of duty paid upon the whole of the cotton wool that is actually manufactured in this country. Six-sixteenths, or three-eighths of a penny per lb. weight may, therefore, be taken as the total amount of duty paid on cotton wool. Now when the price of cotton wool is 4d. a lb. on the average, three-eighths of 1d. per pound is a duty of 9 per cent. on the value of the raw material. If the price of cotton wool be, as it has been of late, not more than 3d. a lb., three-eighths of a 1d. per pound is a duty amounting to not less than 12½ per cent. on the value of the raw material. This duty so levied falls with peculiar severity on the coarsest description of cotton goods. Upon the finer muslins you can hardly estimate the amount of duty, it is so small; but the coarser the fabric, and the more it is in common wear, the higher is the amount of duty. It is in respect to the manufacture of the coarser fabrics that the manufacturers of the country are exposed to the most formidable competition in South America and China, and even in our own colonies. Of course, in respect of the manufactured cotton of the United States, we labour already under great disadvantage, from the ready access which the people of that country possess to the raw material; and they are formidable competitors of ours in the manufacture of all the coarser descriptions of cotton goods. Now, we have already repealed the duty on sheep's wool, and so far as experience has gone, we may justly say that the best effects have resulted from that measure. It has given a great stimulus to the manufacture, and, speaking generally, there is now prosperity existing where a short time since there was a depression and gloom. But in my judgment the removal of the duty on sheep's wool forms a great and additional ground of claim on the part of the manufacturers for the removal of the duty on cotton wool. I know it will be said that this trade is now in a flourishing condition; but we must not disregard the formidable competition to which it is ex-

posed; we must consider how materially this cotton manufacture has contributed to the strength of the country, how materially it aided in enabling us to go through successfully that great conflict in which we were some thirty years ago engaged, and we must consider the thousands and tens of thousands of persons who are now indebted to it for their occupation and subsistence. Seeing and considering these things—seeing the amount of duty imposed upon the coarser fabrics—seeing the extent of competition to which they are exposed—seeing the importance of this manufacture to the commercial greatness of this country, we are prepared to advise the abolition of the duty upon cotton wool. The estimated loss to the revenue by the abolition of the duty on cotton wool—taking as a guide the amount received last year—will not be less than £680,000. In respect then, to the revenue derived from the Customs' duties, we do not propose to make any further alterations than those to which I have now referred. Sir, we have also closely and carefully reviewed the various duties levied by the Excise, with a view of determining, after taking care that a sufficient amount of revenue shall remain available for the purposes of the nation, what are the duties which appear to us to press most grievously upon the interests, and more especially upon the industrial classes of the country. Now, with respect to the Excise duties, no man can look at them without feeling bound to admit that in reference to each of them, a pretty strong *prima facie* case may be made out for its repeal. I do not mean to say which of those duties which we do not mean to touch would be first entitled to relief in future years, because I conceive that nothing is more likely to damp and check manufacturing enterprise than to hold out vague promises as to any one particular article being considered to have claims on the government for relief above the rest. But what I mean to say is, that looking abstractedly at the various articles that are subject to excise, and without reference to the revenue, I think all of them possess claims upon parliament, and that for every one of them a good *prima facie* case can be made out in favour of having that tax reduced, if not altogether repealed. But there is one source of revenue paid to the excise which does appear to us to be open to peculiar objections. Nevertheless there has been no clamour raised for the reduction of this duty. I am not quite sure whether or not greater popularity might not have been obtained by proposing a reduction of the duty on some other articles than the one I am about to name; but I am satisfied that it is the duty of the executive government to take those articles which, whether there has been any clamour for a reduction of duty on them or not, are articles in respect of which any duty at all is open to the greatest objection. Now, to the particular branch of duty to which I refer. The attention of the government may not have been called by any clamour out of doors; but I will undertake, before I sit down, to demonstrate that there is no branch of the excise more entitled to reduction than that to which I have alluded, and which I am about to mention. I have already said, that in respect to this particular article to which I am referring, we have not been subject to any peculiar pressure from without. It is a duty which we have selected, from the conviction, after mature deliberation, that it is one of the most objectionable in point of principle—and the repeal of which will be of great advantage to the public. The duty to which I refer is that duty on the free transfer of property, which is called the Auction Duty. This auction duty is leviable in each part of the United Kingdom. It is a duty which was levied for the first time, with very little consideration, at the commencement of the American war. It is a duty from which other modes of transferring of property are completely exempted. But if you choose to sell your property by auction, in that case a heavy duty is levied. It is therefore a duty which is severely felt by those whom distress compels to resort to that mode of sale. Can there be a greater condemnation of the principle of this duty, when, after you have established it, you have been obliged to grant exemptions from it in no less than thirty-two different cases. Since the act originally passed, there have been scarcely less than thirty-two different laws passed granting exemption from its operation. When commissioners were appointed to examine into the excise duties some years since—after examining the whole of them, they made this remark with respect to auction duties:—"The duty on auctions should be among the first of the taxes to be repealed." Now, observe; all sales which take place under the direction of the Court of Chancery are exempted from the auction duty; and there have been many instances in which estates have been



placed even within the jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery, in order that the sale of them might be totally exempted from the auction duty. And what is now the practice with respect to the sales of estates? Every newspaper is full of advertisements for the sale by auction of landed property. The estate is exposed for sale, the value of the property is ascertained, and then it is generally the understanding of the parties that the estate shall be bought in, and the highest bidder shall buy it by private contract. The estate, therefore, is not sold by auction, and the intention of the law is defeated. This is the mode often pursued. The auction is simply a means of ascertaining the value, but the purchase is made privately the next day, and the payment of the duty is altogether evaded. To give the House an idea of the impolicy of this tax, let me look at the general results. In the year ending the 1st of January 1841—that is, in the year 1840, the whole amount in value of property exposed to auction, of which the excise were obliged to take an account, was not less than £45,232,000, in respect to the whole of which there was the necessity of an examination, and of keeping an account by the officers of excise, who had exactly the same troublesome duty to perform in respect to property advertised for sale by auction, although it was not sold, as they had in respect to property which was sold. But while the total amount of property subject to be taken an account of by the excise was £45,232,000, the actual amount on which the duty was paid was only £8,760,000, consequently there were upwards of £36,000,000 of property exposed to sale, which, on account of exemptions and the mode of evading the law, were free from any duty whatever. Are not these two facts—there being thirty-two exemptions from the duty, and there being only £8,000,000 of property on which duty is paid out of £45,000,000 exposed to sale—are not these strong and almost conclusive proofs of the impolicy of this duty? The present commissioners of excise reported, three years since, when recommending the repeal of the auction duties, that there was more trouble given, and that more intricate questions arose on account of attempts to evade the law, and on questions of exemption in respect to auction duties, than on all the other branches of the excise revenue. The total amount received for auction duties in England, Scotland, and Ireland, is £300,000. There is no duty, the remission of which will, in my opinion, lead to such a great reduction of the excise staff. There is no duty so objectionable in principle as a duty upon the transfer of property; and the duty, be it remembered, is quite independent of the stamps for conveyances which apply to all transfers of property. To select one particular mode of transferring property, and to subject that to a duty, is a course open to grave objections; and I do hope that I have satisfied the House, that although there is no external demand for this reduction, and although articles might be selected upon which a reduction would be more popular, yet looking comprehensively at the interests of property, and considering the advantage which is conferred on a great commercial and manufacturing country, by facilitating the transfer of property, I do not think you could confer a greater benefit upon the United Kingdom, if you selected other duties of the same amount in preference to that which is thus proposed to be reduced to the extent of £300,000. Every auctioneer is under the existing law compelled to take out a license. In the first instance he takes out a general license of £5; but if he is afterwards called on to sell any particular article which is not included in that license, there is then a demand made upon him for another license of £5, and, consequently there are auctioneers who pay £25 for licenses, because some articles are exposed to sale by auction, where they have to officiate as auctioneers, which are not covered by the general auction license. Now, I propose, instead of the principle of requiring separate licenses, to enable auctioneers to dispose of every description of property by taking out one license. I propose to fix the amount of that license at £15, thus enabling the auctioneers who take it out to sell every description of property. I think it is highly probable that the number of auctioneers will be increased by the reduction of the duty. The present number of auctioneers is, I think, about 4,000. A license duty of £15 on each will raise a revenue of £60,000, subject, of course, to the reduction of the present auction duty. I do not believe that one general license of £15 would be felt at all as an onerous impost, while I think it probable that the number of auctioneers would increase. We propose, therefore, to repeal the duty upon auctions, and to substitute for the present system of licensing one uniform license, the

maximum cost of which will be £15. [Mr. Collett: Will each member of a firm be required to take out a separate license?] It is proposed that each member of a firm shall be required to take out a license. There still remains an article upon which there is an excise duty which we propose to repeal; after what has passed regarding the auction duty, I shall make no preliminary observation, but mention it at once—Glass. It seems to us that glass has special claims to the repeal of the duty. The duty on glass has been doubled since the year 1815, and during that period it has never experienced any diminution. I think I can also show that with respect to glass, without denying the case that may be made out for other excisable commodities, supposing we had an abundant revenue, there are grounds upon which it may be said to be entitled to a preference of consideration. Let me recite some of the most prominent of those grounds. In the first place, the amount of duty is not less than 200 to 300 per cent. upon the value of the manufactured article. A contract was lately made for the supply of glass, and the charge made for it was 1s. per square foot, and the manufacturer was asked at what price he would undertake to furnish the same quantity of glass if it were duty free; and his answer was, that he could probably supply it at 3d. per square foot, but at any rate it could not possibly exceed 4d. per square foot. In a case of this kind, we must not estimate the weight of the burden by the mere amount of pecuniary interest. There is no duty, which, in order to levy it, requires such a system of perpetual and vexatious interference with the manufacturer as this duty on glass. Compare the export of glass, the manufacture of which is exposed to this perpetual and vexatious interference, with the export of another article which has the good fortune to be exempt from duty. Your export of earthenware last year doubled that of glass, it was to the value of £751,000; but the export of glass, subject as I have said, to the duty and to constant, vigilant, and annoying interference with the manufacturer, in order that it may be collected, was only to the extent of £388,000. I am about to state another important fact in regard to glass; there is no excise duty on glass in France, Belgium, or Bohemia; and what has been the consequence? That in Bohemia, in particular, the manufacture, by the application of chemical arts, has been brought to a state of admirable perfection. There, glass, under the application of the most beautiful chemical principles, is exposed at different stages to various degrees of heat, and thereby contracts a diversity of colours that produce the most beautiful effects. We have peculiar facilities for accomplishing the same ends; we command the alkali and the coal, and yet we cannot compete with foreigners in the manufacture of glass. What is the fact? That, as there is no excise duty in Belgium, Bohemia, and France, there is no necessity for interference by the State with the process of manufacture. What takes place? There is a great import of foreign glass into the bonded warehouses of this country, to be afterwards exported, being liable to no duty, and it is now beating our own manufacture, not only in foreign markets, but even in the markets of our own colonies. I think I can make out this point without entering into details; for it is most important to observe the progress of gradual encouragement in the export of foreign glass from this country, as compared with glass of our own manufacture. During the last seven quarters there has been a gradual increase in the foreign glass brought into our bonded warehouses, and afterwards exported, as compared with glass the produce of our own domestic manufacture. Is not that a strong fact to exemplify the policy of some new arrangement in this respect? If you permit this article to be free of duty, it is difficult to foresee, in the first place, to what perfection this beautiful fabric may not be brought; and, secondly, it is impossible to say to what new purposes glass, manufactured by our own skill and capital, may not be applied. I hold in my hand the balance-spring of a chronometer, made of glass, instead of the ordinary material, steel. I understand that it possesses a greater degree of elasticity, and that it has a greater power of resisting the alternations of heat and cold. The manufacture is so expensive, and it requires such skill on the part of the workman, that I do not believe, under the present system of restriction, that this exquisite discovery can be generally applied. The fact is that a chronometer, with this glass balance-spring, was sent into the North Sea, at the time when the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. C. Wood) was Secretary to the Admiralty, and was exposed to comparison with ten other chronometers: the result was that the report was in favour of the chronometer

with a glass balance-spring as compared to all the others. So much for the application of glass to a purpose of the utmost delicacy and nicety, in close connection with the progress of astronomical science. I have read too in a French newspaper, the *Courier de l'Europe*, within the last month, that in France they are now manufacturing glass pipes for the conveyance of water, which cost nearly 30 per cent. less than pipes manufactured of iron, and which will bear a greater external pressure than iron pipes. They are luted together with a species of bitumen, and as far as health is concerned for the conveyance of water, glass-pipes are greatly entitled to the preference. That, be it remarked, is in a country where there is no excise duty upon glass, but where the manufacture of it is entirely free; and taking all the articles between these two extremes, the balance-spring of a chronometer, and the pipe for the conveyance of water, who shall say to what purposes this manufacture may not be applied among us when it is wholly relieved from the impost? It is to be borne in mind also that the cost of collecting the duty on flint glass is not less than 57 per cent. In order to prevent fraud, it is necessary that you should have a series of most minute and troublesome regulations as to the melting of glass; notice must be given to the excise officers respecting annealing and other parts of the process, which so encumber it as to make the application of additional skill and ingenuity almost impossible. What we propose is, to relieve it altogether from this burden, and to place it on the same footing as in Belgium, Bohemia, and France. This course will give full and unrestricted play to capital and enterprise in this country, where we enjoy the peculiar advantage of materials in the command of alkali and coal. My belief is, that with this change, if we do not supply almost the whole world with glass, we shall, at least, be able to enter into competition with other nations, who have hitherto had the benefit of that supply. There are many other arguments that might be used upon this point, but by what I have said, I do think I have shown that so far as the manufacture of glass is concerned, in comparison to other manufactures, there are peculiar reasons why the duty on glass should be repealed. A case has been got up in favour of the remission of the window duty; but let us just take the case of glass, to see what a much more beneficial effect upon the laborious portion of the community will be produced by the reduction of the duty on glass, than by the repeal of the window-tax. It is estimated that there are in Great Britain about 3,500,000 houses, of which not more than 500,000 are chargeable with the window-tax; therefore there are 3,000,000 of houses which require glass for the comfort of the inhabitants; and if the House sanctions the removal of the duty upon glass you will thereby confer on the poorer classes a most extensive benefit. I am afraid that I weary hon. members by these particulars, but we have had occasion with the greatest care to look at every side of the question, and I wish to satisfy those who think that other taxes have just claims to our attention, that no desire of popularity, but good and substantial causes, have induced us to give a preference to the reduction of the duty on glass. See how it will affect social improvement. Let us take the arts—what an advance has been made in the art of engraving; reduce the price of plate glass, and you may be said to offer a premium upon still further improvements in the art of engraving. Look next at the consideration of health; nothing prevents the passage of heat so much as glass; the passage of heat into a room, through glass, is as ten to one less than through any other material; but if you interpose between two plates of glass a certain layer of air, you prevent that passage; therefore, for the purpose of health you facilitate the application of double windows, by which the influx or efflux of cold or heat is impeded, and health and comfort promoted. This may be viewed in some respects as a minor consideration, but at all events it is not immaterial. Give me leave to add, that the land commissioners of Ireland have lately made a report, which I received, in fact, the day before yesterday, and they could not have had the slightest conception of what might be the intentions of her Majesty's ministers in this respect; but in their report it is said that there could be few measures which would contribute more to the comfort and improvement of the lower classes in Ireland than to be able to procure glass at a cheap rate. That observation comes from persons who have had their attention particularly directed to the condition of the lower orders in Ireland; and it is a singular confirmation of what I have advanced on the reduction of the duty on glass. The glass manufacture exists in Ireland and Scotland, as well as

in this part of the United Kingdom, so that Ireland will derive a direct benefit from the abolition of this duty; and I do not see why she should not in future be the seat of a most extensive and successful glass manufacture. Even if she be not, the extinction of a duty which is 2 or 300 per cent. more than the value of the article, will give to the people of Ireland, as to the people of Great Britain, the command of a commodity which is essential to comfort and convenience. Looking at it, therefore, in every point of view—whether it be the amount of the duty, which is 2 or 300 per cent. above the value of the article—whether it be the annoying and troublesome restrictions by which levying it is necessarily attended—the numberless purposes to which it may be applied, or the direct addition to the comfort of the working classes of the community, I do hope that this House will acquiesce in the recommendation of her Majesty's government, and will select glass as one of the articles in respect to which the present excise duty ought to be entirely removed. The loss to the revenue from the entire abolition of the duty on glass will amount to £642,000. I have now exhausted the articles in respect to which ministers intend to propose a remission of duties, and I will here venture to recall the recollection of the House to the estimate I made of the amount of the revenue, on the assumption that the income tax would be continued. I will also state the immediate effect the reductions will have in lessening the surplus in our hands. I estimated the surplus, in the case the income tax should be continued, which would be available on the 6th of April, 1846, at £3,409,000; and I will now recapitulate the reductions of the revenue which will arise from the repeal of the different duties I have enumerated. I mentioned them specifying as I went on; but I now state the aggregate amount of diminution. I estimated the loss upon sugar at £1,300,000, the loss upon coal at £118,000. The loss upon minor articles of import, the raw material of manufacture, I stated at £320,000; the loss upon cotton wool I calculate will be £680,000; upon auctions it will be £250,000; because I reckon upon some receipt for licenses, which will make up some part of the loss. The loss by the abolition of the duty on glass will be £640,000; the loss upon staves is included in the £320,000 of loss on articles of import. Thus the total loss to the revenue, supposing the House to sanction the course I have recommended, would be £3,338,000, very nearly absorbing the actual surplus of £3,409,000. I have stated already, that in proposing the continuance of the income tax, I do not propose it for the purpose of having a large surplus revenue; for I should think it right, after defraying the necessary expenses, to appropriate it to the removal of taxes which, in my opinion, are the most oppressive. The House will observe that I have taken no credit for the ultimate saving there will be in the reduction of public establishments. The diminution of clerks will afford a material saving. And I have, besides, taken no credit for that increase to the revenue which will arise from the removal of heavy restrictions upon manufactures, equally onerous to the amount of the duties. I do not hesitate to state that the experiment I propose to make is a bold measure; I do not hesitate to state that: but, looking at the result of past experiments—looking at what is now the state of the customs' revenue, after the reductions we have made—seeing that the customs' revenue, on the 5th January, 1845, presents a surplus, as compared with the preceding year, of not less than £1,305,000, after deducting the loss of £122,000 which arose upon cotton wool last year, and £61,000 upon sheep's wool—seeing, I say, that the customs have increased, notwithstanding these losses, to the extent of £1,305,000—I am not afraid, although I am responsible for the financial condition of the empire, to make this great experiment on the revenue. I propose that the income tax should be continued for a further limited period, because I have the most confident persuasion that the reduction in the prices of articles of great importance which will follow and arise out of the repeal of taxation will be, if not a complete, at least a material compensation for the burden of the income tax. When I recommended the imposition of the income tax, independently of other objections, I was told, "You will be disappointed in your receipts; the amount paid under the income tax will operate unfavourably on other branches of the revenue, and you must expect a diminution in this way nearly equivalent to the gain under the income tax—at any rate you must look for a diminished consumption, and the revenue that you will receive with one hand you must distribute with the other." This is the warning I received.

Now, what is the fact? There has been no reduction traceable to the income-tax. There has, indeed, been some small reduction of £40,000 or £50,000 in the duty on carriages and horses, but that reduction is to be attributed to the progress of railway conveyance; and it is only extraordinary that it has not been greater. But if you exclude the operation of this cause of diminution, my belief is that the receipt of the assessed taxes during the operation of the income tax has been larger than it was before. I say, therefore, that it cannot be apprehended from the experience of the income-tax that it must necessarily reduce the revenue from the assessed taxes, because under the income-tax that revenue from the assessed taxes has materially increased. Remember this—and I do not conceal the fact, for it ought to enter into your consideration when deciding the question, whether you will continue the income-tax—that during its operation the revenue has so prospered that the receipts at present, independently of the income-tax, are almost equal to the national expenditure. Such has been the increase of revenue from permanent sources of income during the existence of the income-tax, that we might have avoided making this experiment; we might have provided for the supplies of the present year without making any application to parliament in respect to increased taxation; but we propose to continue the income-tax for a further period, not for the purpose of providing the supplies for the year, but distinctly for the purpose of enabling us to make this great experiment of reducing other taxes. The term for which I suggest the continuance of it will not exceed that for which it was originally imposed. I cannot say, when urging these extensive reductions—I will not say that it might not have been a wiser course to give a longer period to test the efficacy of the plan; but at the same time it is natural that parliament should ask to have the control of the tax at a period not more remote than that for which it was in the first instance enacted. Therefore I do not propose that it should be renewed for more than three years, and I hope the House will not insist upon a shorter period. It would be impossible to enter upon these extensive reductions of taxation, unless we had the assurance that this great source of revenue would not be dried up at least during the next three years; and at the expiration of three years it is my confident belief that that will have again occurred, which has now occurred, and that it will be competent to parliament then to dispense, as it might now, with the income-tax. I have that reliance upon the elasticity of the resources of this Empire, that I do expect, before the termination of three years, that this repeal of taxes will have produced beneficial effects, and that we shall find an increase of revenue probably enabling us to dispense with the continuance of the income-tax. But let the House remember that the principle on which we have gone, and gone advisedly, is the absolute repeal of taxation in many cases; we do not diminish a tax, on glass for instance, keeping on one-quarter or one-half of it; we do not lower the duty on auctions, on cotton wool, or on articles of smaller importation: but we propose the absolute repeal, expecting from the increased consumption of other taxed articles, an equivalent improvement in the revenue. We do hope that the direct and instant effect will be increased consumption of many articles now subject to duty, invigorating the industry and extending the commercial enterprise of the country through other channels, and supplying the void we cannot hope to fill up by direct taxation. Sir, I believe I have now executed the task I proposed to myself. I have, however imperfectly, explained the views and intentions of her Majesty's government with respect to the financial and commercial policy of the country. I trust that the House will now, as it did on the former occasion, without pronouncing a hasty or a precipitate judgment, take into its consideration comprehensively the whole of the plan. I hope it will reflect, whether or no, upon the whole, it be for the interest of the country to adopt it; and, after mature deliberation, I confidently believe that the decision of the House will be in its favour. Whatever may be the decision, at any rate we have the consolation of knowing that we have not sought popularity by avoiding the question of continuing the property-tax: we have not acted in deference to popular clamour, for we have selected taxes for reduction and abolition against which there has been no agitation. I know it will be said that the principles I have laid down are capable of much further extension, and that in deference to them I ought to have made much greater reductions in import duties; but it is our object, while we establish

good principles, to allow for the present state of society; and viewing the magnitude of the interests involved, the consequence to those interests of rash and hasty interference, it is our desire to realise the utmost degree of good, without disturbance or alarm to interests which cannot be disturbed or alarmed without paralysing industry. Sir, I submit this proposal on behalf of her Majesty's government to the judgment of the House. We have taken this course after careful consideration, and we recommend this plan from a deliberate conviction that if sanctioned by parliament it will conduce to the extension of industry, to the encouragement of enterprise, and that the result of that extension of industry and encouragement of enterprise will be the benefit of all classes of the community, whether they are directly or indirectly connected with commerce, manufactures, or agriculture. Our conviction is, that by the adoption of this proposal, industry and commerce will be immediately benefited, and that indirectly all classes of this vast community will find its welfare promoted.

The right hon. baronet concluded by moving,—“That it is the opinion of this committee, that, towards raising the supply granted to her Majesty, the respective duties on property, professions, trades, and offices, and the Stamp Duties in Ireland, granted by two several Acts passed in the fifth year of her present Majesty, be continued and further granted to her Majesty for a time to be limited.”

After the chairman had put the question—

Sir Robert Peel again rose, and said that he wished the chairman to report progress, and did not mean to ask the House to come to a vote to-night. He trusted, however, that hon. members would see the great importance, for the sake of many branches of trade and commerce, to proceed at once to the consideration of the repeal of taxation. Delay would materially affect many branches of industry, and he hoped therefore that the House would be prepared on Monday to pronounce an opinion, not on the details, but upon the general outline of the plan. This course would not preclude the House from discussing and deciding upon the various parts of the proposal hereafter.

A short conversation ensued, and the House resumed; committee to sit again on Monday.

FEBRUARY 17, 1845.

On the resolution moved by Sir R. Peel on Friday being put, Mr. Roebuck proposed as an amendment, to leave out the words “professions, trade, and offices;” a very long discussion ensued, towards the close of which—

SIR R. PEEL said, the hon. member who had just addressed the House (Mr. Vernon Smith,) will have for his inspection either to-morrow or next day, a paper which will contain a list of the whole of the articles now included in the tariff, and from which it is now proposed by the government to remove the duty. When I introduced the financial measure of the government, I stated generally that certain remissions of duty would take place.—I mentioned some of the raw materials from which it is proposed the duty should be removed, especially those connected with manufactures. But if the hon. member meant that I should have gone through the whole of the 430 articles from which it is proposed to remove the duty in the statement I made on Friday night, I must say that I feel I should ere I had enumerated fifty of the articles have completely exhausted the patience of the House. I think, therefore, that I adopted the best plan in the course I pursued. The hon. gentleman will, however, find a complete list of the articles he refers to in the paper which will be ready to-morrow or next day. Now, Sir, I was sorry to hear from my hon. friend the member for Somersetshire, that I have been insensible to the distress which in some parts of the country prevails among the agriculturists. My hon. friend, the member for Somersetshire stated, that I had received the statements of the tenant-farmers, and that I had listened to them with very great attention. And he stated what was perfectly true, that I was “touched” by the statements they made. [A Laugh.] I cannot see any cause for merriment in my admission. I certainly did lament the local distress which I was informed existed in some parts of the country. My hon. friend seems to think that I have not expressed any sympathy for the suffering existing in the agricultural districts. But I did express sympathy for local agricultural distress; that sympathy I again express, for I believe

that there exists in some parts of the country distress amongst agriculturists, that distress being attributable, in my opinion, to natural causes—to the season. The long-continued drought, the failure of the hay harvest in some parts of the country, and the failure of the turnip crop in other parts, have been injurious to the farmer, and the consequence is, that there exists local agricultural distress. I admit the existence of local distress, and sincerely regret it. But I cannot see that the distress among agriculturists is universal. I believe that though in England local agricultural distress exists, in Scotland and Ireland distress is by no means prevalent, and that the produce of wheat and some other articles has in many cases been abundant. As to the adoption of measures for relieving local distress, I must say that it is difficult to devise them, caused as that is by the seasons and the failure of the crops. Now, if my hon. friend, the member for Somersetshire, will call to mind what passed at the meeting to which he has referred, he will remember that no suggestion was offered with respect to the remission of any particular tax. I think that there are taxes which do bear heavily on the agricultural labourers—I certainly think that the malt tax is one of these. I think that the malt duty does press on the agricultural labourers. But at the same time, it will be remembered that I did most strenuously resist the repeal of that tax in the year 1835, and I think that the agriculturists feel that the repeal of the malt tax would not give a general and universal relief. In some places, a feeling exists in favour of a repeal of this tax; but there are many parts of this country which do not consider that a repeal of the malt tax would confer a very great general advantage. I paid great attention to the statements and representations which were made to me at the meeting the hon. member alluded to, but no suggestion whatever was made as to any particular tax being remitted; and I must say, that it would not be easy to find a tax peculiar to the agricultural interest. The tenant-farmer, it should be remembered, paying under £300 a-year for rent, does not pay the income tax. I feel that local taxation does press heavily on the landed interest, as compared with the other portions of the community; but it would be exceedingly difficult for one dealing with this question of the income-tax to give any relief by means of interfering with local taxation. I think the government did right in paying a portion of the expenses of criminal prosecutions from the Consolidated Fund; but I should object to taking any portion of the expenses incurred by the maintenance of roads and bridges out of that fund. I think the payment by government of any portion of the expense of maintaining roads and bridges would be highly objectionable, and that the species of local expenditure should be superintended by the agriculturists themselves, and altogether apart from the interference of any government officer. I have now, I do assure my hon. friend, the member for Somersetshire, the firmest conviction that if they will take advantage of the measures which will follow the continuance of the income-tax, their interests will be more promoted than if I were to deal with local taxation, and charge the Consolidated Fund with part of the expenses now payable by the agricultural body. If that be the case, and that it be inexpedient to deal with the malt tax, and that there be no other tax pressing upon agriculture, my hon. friend must feel that I am not in a position to suggest the remission of that tax, which falls peculiarly upon agriculture. The repeal altogether of the glass duty, the repeal of the duty upon raw cotton, will, in my opinion, benefit the agricultural interest. Indeed, I cannot conceive a class that will derive greater benefit from the repeal of taxes of that nature than the agricultural class. Take the agricultural labourer. We have all the utmost desire to better his condition. Is it right, then, I ask, to continue a tax which falls with peculiar severity upon the articles of clothing worn by the agricultural labourer? Take the muslin of the rich. There is no portion of the tax of three-eighths of a penny per lb. upon cotton levied upon that article, while the dress worn by the agricultural labourer, does pay a considerable portion of that tax. I say, then, remit that tax, and you clearly give to the agricultural labourer the means of purchasing a necessary article of clothing at a lower rate. Again, with respect to glass. If you reduce the price of the square foot of glass from 1*s.* to 3*d.* or 4*d.*, it is clear that both the landlord and occupying tenant will derive great benefit from it; and if you increase the demand for labour,—if you remove the pressure from the springs of industry,—and not only introduce prosperity into the manufacturing districts, but afford a guarantee for its continuance,—I must again repeat, that I believe the inter-

val will be but short before the agricultural interest will find itself partaking in that prosperity. Therefore do I think that the course I propose to pursue would have a direct tendency to ameliorate the condition of that interest in the country, the distress of which I deeply lament. With respect to the auction duty, I hope the House will not come to a hasty judgment upon the policy of removing it. The noble lord taunted me for proposing to repeal a duty against which no one has raised any objection. Let me hope that the noble lord will read the opinions of those who were appointed by himself to inquire into the operation of the excise duties. Let me hope that before the noble lord ridicules the repeal of this duty, he will read the opinions of Sir Henry Parnell and of Mr. Wickham, the present chairman of the Board of Stamps and Taxes, and see what they say in reference to it. I moved to-night for account of the exemptions from that duty which have taken place from time to time; and also of the property which was subject to account under the direction of the Board of Excise, and of the amount of property under which the duty was actually levied; and I think the return will prove to the House, from the nature of the establishment necessary to be upheld for levying it, from the numerous attempts at fraud which it gives rise to, and from the consumption of time occupied in seeing whether the right of exemption from the auction duty do or do not exist, that it is extremely advisable to repeal that duty. Indeed, from the cases of exemption alone, the House will be able to judge whether it will not be for the benefit of all classes to permit them to dispose of their property in whatever manner they may think most conducive to their interests, without being subject to this duty. The noble lord censured me for entering into a discussion about the army estimates, and for attempting to show that there is sufficient reason for maintaining the present amount of force. I know that the statement I made was made in substance on a former occasion: but I also know that if I had not referred to the expenditure of the country, if I took for granted that the estimates were right, and neglected to state the reasons which induced her Majesty's government to think it would not be prudent to reduce the army, or declined to suggest any reason for the increase in the ordnance and navy estimates—I knew perfectly well that if I did that, if I proposed to maintain the income-tax, and yet omitted altogether the consideration of expenditure, I should have been met by declarations that there ought to be a reduction of the estimates, and that our present amount of surplus precluded the necessity of continuing the income-tax. I did endeavour therefore to show the House that the army could not be reduced, and I did advance sufficient grounds, I hope, for showing that the navy and ordnance estimates ought to be increased, and I did so before I directed myself to the question of the income-tax, because I felt that a justification of the proposed expenditure ought to precede the application for the continuance of that tax. It may appear very ungrateful to quarrel with one's supporters, and, as the noble lord and his friends intend to support me, I am unwilling to say a word that may tend to prevent them from acting upon that intention. But the noble lord having begun by stating, that of all taxes imposed upon the country the income-tax was the most vexatious, the most oppressive, and the most unjust, I can only say that I was most agreeably disappointed when I found that he intended to give it that sort of support which is decidedly the most useful, the most cordial, and the best—the support of his vote on a division; and, considering that the noble lord does believe that this tax is, of all others, the most oppressive, inquisitorial, and vexatious, I feel still more sensitively on that account the compliment and value of his support. Having the opinions of the noble lord and his friends in favour of the tax, and their ready consent to vote for its continuance, I do hope I have not said anything to shake their determination. The noble lord did not, certainly, refer to this circumstance,—that, supposing his present position happened to be changed, and that he found himself on these benches, he would feel this surplus of £5,200,000, however derived, to be a most comfortable addition to the ordinary and permanent revenue of the country. And I am perfectly certain that the expectation of such a contingent advantage in the event of his succeeding me did not at all enter into his mind; but that upon the whole he does think with me, that it is for the public interest that this tax, objectionable as it is, should nevertheless be continued for the further period of three years. I quite agree with the noble lord also that we ought to continue it simply as it stands at present, and without attempting any modification of it. After the



opinions we have heard expressed to-night upon the subject of a modification, and considering the sort of discussions we should have in committee upon the several proposals to be brought forward by the hon. members for Kendal, for Bath, and for Somersetshire—looking at the specimen already afforded us in this preliminary discussion, I think the House can scarcely refuse to come to the conclusion, that it is better to vote for the continuance of the tax for three years longer in its present form, than encounter the tedious and unnecessary discussions which those proposals would inevitably lead to. With respect to funded property, every loan bill has contained an engagement to the public creditor that persons possessing funded property should not be subjected to any tax that did not equally apply to all. Mr. Pitt declared it to be a violation of public faith to act in opposition to that engagement, and whether the interest be permanent or temporary you will find it necessary to respect that engagement. Indeed, my opinion is, that any attempt to convert annuities into capital would prove wholly futile, and that even if it were not, the scrutiny which you would oblige persons to undergo in consequence of the attempt would be most objectionable. Besides, it is in the nature of all taxes to press unequally. The surgeon or the artist will have to bear the burden of a tax levied on glass and cotton, but may escape that on wine by not consuming it; but the man with a temporary interest in his property is under the same obligation to pay as much as the man with a permanent interest. I much doubt, however, whether in case of such taxes as the tax upon glass and cotton, the sum I shall remit for three years to a man with no permanent interest in his income, will not amount very nearly to the sum he will have to pay on account of the income-tax. What I propose is this:—I ask a man with an income of £5,000 a-year to contribute for three years about £140 a-year, not merely for the purpose of having an increased expenditure on account of the navy, but for the purpose of promoting an experiment, from the result of which, if successful, as I think it will be, he will not only derive immediate benefit, but conduce by this temporary sacrifice of £2:18 per cent. to the future prosperity of the country. He will purchase glass, and all those articles on the raw material of which the duty is to be reduced, at a lower rate; while his servants and labourers will be enabled to purchase the necessary articles of wearing apparel cheaper than before. This will afford to him some immediate compensation for the payment of the income-tax. That tax, I must observe, will also afford a guarantee for the continuance of our present prospects, and at the same time diminish the chance of vicissitudes. I have been asked by the hon. member for Devonport what assurance I could give that this tax should expire at the end of three years? I said I should have felt with greater confidence that the taxes remitted would recover themselves, or rather that there would be an increase in the consumption of other articles on account of the remission of these taxes, if the income-tax were continued for five instead of three years. I feel bound to say that for so extensive an experiment three years is rather a short period. I said so the other night. If I could have been perfectly sure of success I would have proposed it for five years; at the same time I do think there are good grounds for hoping that at the end of three years we may be at liberty to discontinue it. I see the population of the country increasing, the capital of the country rapidly accumulating, and I think if we facilitate the application of that capital to new branches of industry and manufactures, that the effect will be greatly to increase the demand for labour; and with the demand for labour to increase the consumption of articles subject to taxation. If I look to the declared nature of exports in 1844, and compare it with that of 1843, what do I find? That in 1843 the declared value of exports from this country was £44,812,000; and that in 1844 it amounted to £50,515,000, showing an increase of more than £5,000,000 in the course of that short space of time. I see many causes combining to increase the prosperity of the country. The establishment of railways, rendering travelling more easy and traffic less expensive; a surplus capital, instead of seeking for investments on foreign security; and an increasing population,—are circumstances calculated, I think, to justify the hope that at the end of no very remote period there will be an increase in the consumption of articles subject to duty, and with it an increase of production. We shall have in the year 1849 a proportion of this income-tax; supposing the income-tax should not increase during the three years, we shall have a sum of £5,200,000 a year to deal with. On the 5th of April, 1848, the in-

come-tax will expire; but in the year following we shall be allowed to take credit for the sum of £2,600,000, being half a year then uncollected, as we should be entitled in the course of this year, if the House shall not consent to a renewal. Therefore, I may say that the income-tax will last, subject to a reduction of one-half in the fourth year, to the extent of four years from this time, only that it will yield but £2,600,000 in the fourth year. I cannot so far foresee events and occurrences as to be able to guarantee that this tax may not be necessary at the end of that period. Nay, at the expiration of the present time the House may be of opinion, although no government may ask them for renewal, that there ought to be a continuance of the tax. If that should be the opinion of the House I trust that the right hon. gentleman will not hold me to an engagement made now, that the tax should then necessarily cease: but I have every reason to think that there will be a fair opportunity for the House to consider, at the end of that period, whether this tax ought to cease. I make, however, a great experiment now, with this full confidence—that whatever may happen, the House is determined to maintain unimpaired the public credit. The right hon. gentleman, the member for Halifax, has stated that possibly the sugar duties may not answer the expectations I have formed, and has hinted that they may not recover quite so rapidly as I expect. The House, however, will remember that for the next two years we shall have an additional revenue of £600,000, for which I have not taken credit. Suppose there should be some falling off in the estimate I have formed of the produce from the sugar duties, we shall still be in the receipt of the £600,000; and if the falling off be only temporary, of course we shall have an available set-off in this sum for any diminution of the sugar duties. Upon those grounds we recommend the adoption of this tax—they are grounds, however which it is impossible to reduce to any accurate calculation. We are about to take off the duty upon many raw materials which enter largely into manufactures. I admit with the noble lord that these reductions may be attended with the loss of revenue; but that peculiar political economy which would prevent a reduction of the Tariff, because there would be a loss to the revenue, is most extraordinary, especially as falling from the noble lord, who has the credit of being so great a financier. There is no doubt if the noble lord takes this book, showing the effect of the late alterations in the Tariff, he will find that the reduction of duties on raw materials has led to a loss in the revenue. Of course the reduction of duty may have this effect; but if we find, concurrently with this reduction of duty, a greater increase in the manufactures of this country; if we find increased exports, and if we recollect that there cannot be these increased exports, without an increase of labour, surely we must not complain very much at the loss of revenue. So it is with respect to the wool duties: no doubt I may be taunted with the loss of £100,000 to the public revenue; but if by the reduction we have stimulated the manufactures; if there has consequently been great activity in the woollen manufactures, and in the numbers employed; will not the noble lord find in that increased demand for industry, in that progress of the manufactures, and in that increase of exports, ample satisfaction for the loss of the £100,000? I am prepared to tell the noble lord by the reduction of the £600,000 for the cotton duties we may expose the revenue to a loss; and the only way in which we can recommend the reduction is, that by reducing the duty we shall enable our manufacturers to enter into competition with formidable rivals, and that the advantage which will be gained will be more than a fair and complete compensation for any such loss. The noble lord's argument, indeed, would be an argument against any reduction of duties on raw materials, if he should only say, "See what a number of taxes you have reduced, and there has been no increase in your revenue." On Friday night I told the House it might have been possible for us to have avoided the necessity of renewing the property-tax. I do not wish to say one word in favour of a continuance of the tax beyond the three years; I do not think that the House will agree that the income and property-tax as now imposed ought to be permanent; I do think, however, they will deem a present renewal proper, for the purpose of enabling us to make a great experiment with regard to very onerous taxation, although they may not deem the tax such as ought to be permanent in the time of peace: but I hope that in so continuing it they will not impair its efficiency during war, by now making too many exemptions, or admitting too many claims to

relief. At the same time, I must say, that I believe the tax to be less onerous now than it was in the years 1842 and 1843; there have been less complaints made in the course of last year at the stamp office, than in the first two years; and for the next three years, I do not expect any great complaints by the payers of this tax, or any very urgent demands for its immediate repeal, and for the restoration of the other duties we now take off. We are deeply convinced, seeing the nature of the duties we are about to remove, seeing that the repeal of the duty on glass will operate in largely increasing the manufacture, and seeing the increased means of competition that will be ensured to our manufacturers by the repeal of the duties upon cotton—we are decidedly of opinion, as regards the glass duty and the cotton duty, that the repeal of both is of the most urgent necessity. It is from that conviction—believing that all classes of the community will benefit largely by the remission of taxes which interfere with our manufacturing prosperity, the removal of which is of the utmost importance—that we have come to the conclusion that it is our duty to propose the renewal of the income and property-tax for a further period of three years, and I hope that in this proposal we shall be supported by the almost unanimous opinion of this House.

The committee divided on the question that the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question:—Ayes, 263; Noes 55; majority 208.

Mr. Roebuck then proposed that the tax be extended to Ireland. This motion was also negatived, and the House resumed. Committee to sit again.

## OPENING LETTERS AT THE POST-OFFICE.

FEBRUARY 28, 1845.

On the question being put that the Order of the Day be read for going into Committee of Ways and Means,—Mr. T. Duncombe referred at some length to the system of espionage adopted in what is called the Inner, or Secret Office of the Post-Office—the hon. member instanced his own as well as other cases in which letters had been opened, and concluded by moving that Colonel Maberly attend at the bar of the House on Monday, with the books belonging to that department.

Mr. Disraeli seconded the motion, and in a bitterly sarcastic speech reviewed the policy of Sir Robert Peel, in which he denounced the rigorous discipline required from his supporters; and trusted the right hon. baronet would in future take a more charitable and condescending view of their conduct than he had hitherto been in the habit of doing.

**SIR ROBERT PEEL:** There was, Sir, one part of the speech of the noble lord the member for the City of London (Lord J. Russell) which I heard with peculiar satisfaction. I understood the noble lord distinctly to state that while he differed from the government as to the propriety of the course they had pursued of opening any letter for the purpose of promoting other than our own domestic and peculiar interests, yet, that in the case of the letters of Mr. Mazzini he did think that the explanation given on the part of the government, namely, that they had been no parties to any proceedings which might involve the personal safety of refugees in this country, was perfectly and entirely satisfactory. We did regret, certainly, to hear the expression of the noble lord on a former occasion, and we hoped that the explanation which we had given was generally satisfactory; but no part of the discussion could have given to me or to my colleagues greater pain than that which should have left an impression that we had combined with any other power, for the purpose of encouraging a foolish project, of which the success was most improbable, in order that we might increase the strength of that power. I can only say, that I think had we done so, that it would have been a gross abuse of the power committed to the government. I think if we had been a party to any such proceeding, on the part of the refugees, that our conduct would have rendered us liable to the severest condemnation; but I go further, and say that if we had suspected that the proceedings of the refugees were likely to endanger their state, and that we had the power, by timely warning, of preventing danger resulting either to themselves or to the State—I say that, in such circumstances, it would have been our duty, as public

men and Christians, to have given that timely warning. I understand, however, from the noble lord, that that power is not in any case to be made subservient to the interests of foreign countries; still I think that the explanation on that particular point on which our conduct was questioned, has been entirely satisfactory. The House will recollect that we commenced these discussions in consequence of an imputation of the hon. gentleman that we were responsible for the blood of those unfortunate persons. I hope that the explanation which we have given will be satisfactory to the hon. gentleman himself, and that he does feel that that imputation, which would have been most painful to us, had there been any foundation for it, was groundless. Sir, I won't discuss with the hon. and learned gentleman the question which he has again agitated to-night, as to whether or no the issue of warrants could be successfully maintained in a court of law. That would, I think, be beside the present question. For suppose the hon. and learned gentleman's position to be maintainable in a court of law—suppose that these warrants are not recognised or warranted by statute or by common law, yet I think that the House will feel, if that be the case, that parliament and not the executive government is responsible; for, if ever a course were pursued tending to involve the executive government in a snare, it is that which parliament has pursued on this point. They are cognizant of the practice of the executive government—they know that the executive government does, either by statute, or by common law, or by prerogative, exercise the right of opening letters; they do not give that right certainly by the statute book, but they introduce words into the statute which confirm the impression of the government that from some principle or other they have the power; because they say distinctly that the post-office shall be punished for opening letters unless they be opened by warrant from the Secretary of State. I say, therefore, if we—if Mr. Fox—if all ministers since the revolution have been wrong in exercising that power, parliament and not ministers is responsible. Your remedy is to clear up all doubt by declaring by statute that no such power exists, or should exist, and then proceed to say that it shall not exist. But I will not mix up the question for discussion this evening with that other question, as to whether the power is one that should continue to be exercised. Let us reserve that until the proper occasion. I will only say that I think it is proper that such a power should be maintained for the reasons given by the noble lord, and though I think it would be dangerous to state in a public proclamation that the facilities of the post-office shall be given at all times and under any contingencies—though I think that that would be a dangerous doctrine practically to maintain, yet there is no limitation in the possible abuse of that power which I should not be ready to assent to. The proper question for consideration to-night, however, is whether or no there shall now be a public inquiry at the bar with respect to the alleged opening of the letters of the hon. member for Finsbury. Some hon. gentlemen, who have spoken recently, have imputed to us that we made a charge against the hon. gentleman—that we are not the defendants, but that the hon. gentleman is the defendant in this case, being charged by us with improper transactions leading to the opening of his letters. Not one word of the kind has ever been said by us. We have no accusation against him. He himself it was who publicly declared (relying, as it would appear, upon information which he had received from the post-office), either that his letters had been opened, or that he strongly suspected the fact; and I believe if the hon. gentleman had not made that declaration, that no one would have known that he had the slightest ground for the suspicion. The question then is now—whether in consequence of the suspicion entertained by him, we shall or shall not summon the officers of the post-office to the bar of this House, and institute a public inquiry. It has been admitted in the course of this debate, that the hon. gentleman, though a member of parliament, stands in no different position from any other subject. ["No."] I don't say that every one in the House is of that opinion, but I think that every one who has spoken has admitted that, so far as the present question is concerned, there is no distinction between the hon. gentleman and the meanest subject of the realm. The hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Jervis), at any rate, made use of that expression. I won't say that there is not any difference between a member of parliament and an ordinary subject in all cases; because I say that, if any govern-

ment were to exercise this power, and were to examine the correspondence of a member of this House because he was a political opponent, it would be impossible to deny that the abuse would be infinitely exaggerated by such a perversion of power. I say that it would be indeed what the hon. gentleman describes it—"a base, mean, and dishonourable exercise of power," if for the purpose of invading the free exercise of an opponent's privileges, his letters were subject to the scrutiny of the government. Apart from this, with reference to this evening's discussion, I see no difference between a member of parliament and any other person who alleges that his letters have been opened. Let me ask you then when you call on us to answer the allegation made by a member of parliament, will you not admit that if it had been brought by any other subject, not a member of parliament, we should be under an equal obligation to answer that question? Suppose that my right hon. friend answers the hon. member's question, or admits in his case that there shall be an examination at the bar, let me ask you this question: "After answering the hon. member's question, after admitting evidence at the bar, if a petition be presented from another person, not a member of this House, making no stronger allegations than the hon. gentleman does, alleging merely that he suspects his letters to have been opened, declaring confidently that he can prove it, will you not then recognize an equal right upon his part to demand an answer, and to have an inquiry?" Suppose a petition should be presented in the course of next week (and that the government had acquiesced in this proposition), saying, "I perceive in the case of one of your own members, that the government has answered his question, and has instituted an inquiry at the bar; I am not a member; I am not protected by your privileges; I have not the same influence and authority that the hon. member has; I am not supported by party connections, but I make the same allegations. I suspect that my letters have been opened, and I demand an inquiry." Could you refuse it? Could you then say, "but this is a breach of privilege?" I say, that in each case, without the proper authority, it is a high misdemeanour, punishable by law; I could not say the contrary, nor could you, after having set the example of an inquiry in the case of one of your own members. You must then call upon my right hon. friend to answer other questions; Colonel Maberly must be again called to the bar—other inquiries must be instituted. This will not apply only in one individual case, but make up your minds to repeated allegations of the same nature, and to the frequent rendering of similar inquiries. Now, I must say, as I have said to my right hon. friend, that this is no personal question, so far as my right hon. friend is concerned. I claim a full participation in his responsibility. I consider each member of the government as responsible for the exercise of this power as my right hon. friend; and I should be ashamed if I attempted to transfer any part, either of the responsibility or the unpopularity, from myself, or from other members of the government, to the shoulders of my right hon. friend. Now, let me ask you, if you admit my position, that this question once answered and this inquiry once instituted, there you can't stop, but must deal out an equal measure of justice to others, let me ask whether you can't find a reason for my right hon. friend declining at the outset to answer such a question? It is not fear—it is not the want of moral courage—it is not a desire (as the noble lord imputes to us) of consulting our own dignity, but it is a sense of public duty, and a foresight of the consequences of a first acquiescence, which induce my right hon. friend and his colleagues to decline answering this question. Would you attempt to subject us to those fresh explanations, to those fresh questions, and to that fresh necessity of answering them, to which I have alluded? Then let me ask you whether the conduct of the House of Commons has been consistent with the first principles of justice? You said last year that there were suspicious circumstances attending this exercise of power. The public mind was excited on the subject, and indignation was concentrated against the government, which was supposed to have adopted some new rule upon this subject. We said:—"Seeing the prevailing opinion of the House, and the state of the public mind, we think it is desirable that a full and complete inquiry should be made into the practice of those who have issued these warrants. Our opinion is, in order that the explanation may be full and complete, that that inquiry ought to be before a secret committee." Some very few dissented from that opinion. But the opinion of this House in favour of a secret

committee, as compared with any other tribunal, was so predominant, that there was no division upon the subject, and, without the record of an opposing sentiment by vote, the House of Commons determined to have a secret committee. There were some, whose opinion is justly entitled to the highest respect, who declared peremptorily their preference of a secret committee; the noble lord declared his opinion to be in favour of a secret committee. A secret committee was appointed, and though you now charge us with having nominated the committee, you can't, at any rate, deny the fact, that out of nine, five were members not only sitting on that side of the House, but were members who had recorded their votes against us on the critical question, when the majority was exceedingly small. You had, therefore, five members on your committee who had not only generally opposed us in politics, but who had recorded their previous opinion upon this subject against her Majesty's government. Confiding in your declared opinion that that was a fair tribunal, and that that committee ought to be a secret one, every secretary of state went before it, and gave the fullest information in his power with respect to the issue of warrants. There was not a fact connected with that subject which was withheld from the knowledge of that committee. The hon. gentleman had the fullest opportunity of appearing before that committee. He stated his reasons afterwards for not appearing; still he certainly had an opportunity of appearing before it. Evidence was given in reliance on your intention of having that tribunal a secret one. Then that committee made a report which will clearly enable many persons to come forward and allege their suspicions that their letters have been opened; for the report states that—"During the outbreak in the manufacturing and mining districts which took place in August, 1842, in the week of the greatest anxiety a clerk was sent down from the London post-office, with directions, under the authority of the secretary of state's warrant, to open the letters of six parties named therein, all taking a prominent part in the disturbances of that period. In the same week, the same clerk was directed, under authority of two other such warrants, to open the letters of ten other persons named, and a fortnight later to open the letters of one other person; making seventeen in all. Most of the persons whose letters were ordered on this occasion to be opened, were indicted, and many both indicted and convicted, before the special commission appointed to try the parties concerned in those disturbances. With one exception, these warrants were issued between the 18th and 25th of August, 1842, and they were all cancelled on the 14th of October."

I say, then, by the frankness and unreservedness of our explanations before that committee, and by the publication of the fact as to the dates of the warrants, and as to the circumstances that some of the parties were indicted and condemned, that you have enabled them to make the allegations to which I refer; you have enabled them to come forward and to present petitions, stating to the House, that after examining the report of the committee—seeing that parties were subsequently indicted—seeing that the period is given for which the warrants were issued, they were enabled to state that they had a strong suspicion that their letters had been opened; and in that event, I ask you, will you admit that there should be an inquiry in their case? ["Yes."] No; but will you, on the presentation of such a petition, call on the secretary of state to say whether he issued the warrants, and if he declines answering, will you have an inquiry at the bar? [Mr. Duncombe: That would not be a breach of privilege.] Now, the hon. member falls back on his privilege. The hon. gentleman is so pressed by my argument—he feels that I have proved so completely that once open an inquiry in this case, and you cannot limit it to that, but must go into others, that he is now obliged to draw a distinction and say that this is a breach of privilege. [Mr. Duncombe: I always did say so.] Yes; but I say, that the House has distinctly said, that in this question there is no difference between the hon. gentleman and the meanest subject of the realm. I will, therefore, continue to try the question under this aspect. A petition is presented by a member; you appoint a trial at the bar upon the general allegation—not upon the proof of any opening of letters; but upon the allegation that the petitioner thinks he can prove that his letters have been opened; in that case, you have appointed an examination at your bar. Then comes another person; he says, "I have no remedy by law, I cannot prove against the officers of the post-office that they have opened my letters, but I strongly suspect, from the publication of the report of your committee, that I am

one of the parties referred to. I ask you to give me the same advantage which you have given to one of your own members; rescue my character as you have rescued his; call the officer to the bar of the House; ask him to show that he had a legal warrant for examining my letters, and if he had not, let him be punished." In such a case it would be vain, I say, to attempt to draw any distinctions of privilege. The hon. gentleman does not bring forward the question as a breach of privilege, and I believe that he could not maintain it as a breach of privilege. I say that you will have acted most unjustly towards the government, if, after making us disclose all the evidence that we could give—telling us "that the tribunal which you established was fair and impartial"—inducing us to tell them all they knew; if, after such an examination they acquitted us of any improper motives, you should now say, that that acquittal was not complete, and should attempt to institute an inquiry at the bar: declaring that you think we should not be individually responsible for the exercise of this objectionable power, surely, you won't confine the examination at the bar to one particular case. I should think you would prefer a much more liberal and extended policy; you would say, "We were wrong in selecting a secret committee; we want to ascertain what has been the conduct of other governments, and the examination so instituted at the bar shall be a full and complete examination, and shall at least extend as far back as 1822." Could you in justice refuse that when Colonel Maberly was brought to the bar he should be questioned regarding every accusation? If an hon. member on your side of the House should extend his inquiries of Colonel Maberly beyond the limits of the hon. member's letters, would you call upon the speaker to interdict such inquiries and to say, "Colonel Maberly was called to the bar for a specific purpose, and the inquiries put to him must not extend beyond that?" Why it would be impossible, consistently with common justice, or with your own declaration, that you should do so. Depend upon it that the inquiry cannot be limited to the letters of the hon. member for Finsbury. It is not an individual inquiry that you are about to institute; you must extend it to every petitioner who can make out that he has a good *prima facie* case (and I cannot conceive the man who cannot make out as good a *prima facie* case as the hon. member)—you must extend it to every one who can tell you that he is labouring under an unjust imputation, and asks you to rescue his character from the suspicions that he imagines to have been cast upon it. So far you must go in justice to the public; but you must go further in justice to the government, and you must extend this public inquiry at the bar at least to the warrants which are in existence since 1822. I do not see how the members of any former government can deprecate that course. I do not believe that this power, when exercised by the noble lord, was exercised except for honest and public purposes. I am as firmly convinced of that fact as I am that I am now addressing the House of Commons; and, so far as I can judge from their records, I am confident of it. I do not suppose the noble lord would deprecate inquiry from any personal views; but do you think it would be advisable to insist upon such an inquiry at the bar? I speak not of the consumption of public time, because I know it is very properly said, that upon the occasion of great constitutional questions you cannot do better than occupy the time of parliament by clearing them up; but my firm conviction is, that you will not nor can you have a more full and complete inquiry than you have had. I wish to convince the House that you cannot limit inquiry to an individual case; and that, if you insist upon inquiry, you are bound to examine every charge that may be made to contrast or to conflict with the conduct of past governments. And the examination you are about to enter upon, if the motion be carried, is therefore much more extensive than you suppose. If last year you thought a secret committee was the best tribunal, certainly by having a public committee now, where every name must be published, where the secretaries of state must justify every warrant, and account for every transaction which was the result of each warrant,—you contradict your own former views, and commence a much longer inquiry than you then thought necessary. I state, then, that reason and a sense of public duty—and not the apprehensions of any consequences personal to ourselves—compel us to say, "We have already gone before the tribunal you have appointed, and we think you ought to be satisfied with our explanation; we cannot enter into details which we did not enter into then." Upon these grounds I must give my opposition to the

motion. I do not think it consistent with justice that we should be called upon to enter again on our defence; and I do not think it consistent with prudence or public policy to enter into an extended examination. Here, Sir, I should close if I had not heard the speech of the hon. gentleman who seconded the motion. I do hope, that having discharged himself of the accumulated virus of the last week, he now feels more at ease than he was. If that is so, he need not be disturbed by any impressions on his part that he has at all interfered with my peace of mind in consequence of the attack he has made. I tell the hon. gentleman at once that I will not condescend to reciprocate personalities with him. Neither now nor after the lapse of a week will I stoop to reciprocate them—I feel no inclination for the practice. I also feel, Sir, that in this respect the hon. gentleman would have a very great advantage over me, because he has leisure to prepare his attacks. I have often heard from that hon. gentleman observations of a very personal nature against myself. I have often heard them made from immediately behind me, but I never felt it necessary to notice them, and I should not have noticed them the other night if it had not been that the hon. gentleman who seconded a motion, of which he entirely disapproved, said he did it in a friendly spirit. That alone induced me to notice his remarks; but in the course of that speech he charged me with having appointed to office an hon. gentleman who had been concerned or connected with a plot, which I was obliged to repel. I will not, however, make any further reference to that, because the hon. gentleman made a full and ample reparation. He was betrayed into an error, but he made all the reparation in his power. I at once frankly aver that, and not one word more shall I say upon the subject. But the declaration of the hon. gentleman that he seconded the motion in a friendly spirit, made me partake of the feelings which ran through the House, which we have no word to describe, but which in the French chambers are called *mouvements divers*—feelings partly partaking of the nature of a shudder and partly of a laugh, when the hon. gentleman said he seconded the motion in a “friendly spirit.” I assure the hon. gentleman I have not the slightest wish to fetter his independence, or the independence of any other member of this House. Every man must be the guardian of his own independence; and if the hon. member disapproves either of the acts of the government, or disapproves of the general policy of the government, he must censure the act, and he must condemn the government. I have here no right to prevent the hon. gentleman from following an independent course of action. I court no man’s favour. I think I do understand the relations in which a minister ought to stand towards those who give him their general support. I think he ought, while he possesses it, to be proud of their confidence; but I think he ought to incur the risk of losing that confidence by taking the course which he believes to be for the public interest. That is the course I have taken, and that course I will continue to take. If you think that any acts of mine are at variance with the policy which I supported in the year 1834 in government, or have supported since, let those acts be examined, vote against them, and condemn them. If you think, in respect to the church, that any course pursued by the government has endangered that institution, censure and oppose the particular act. If you think we have, at variance with our principles, greatly extended popular privileges, or infused the fresh blood of democracy into the working of the constitution, tell us so, and oppose us. If you denounce our commercial or financial policy, oppose the particular act. If the combination of our misconduct is such that you think we are no longer entitled to confidence, mark your want of confidence by a public declaration of opinion and by distinct opposition to us. I should regret the loss of that confidence to which the hon. gentleman refers; but I freely say that, as the minister of the Crown, I will attempt to do good as far as I can, and if, in attempting to accomplish that, I forfeit the confidence which I have so much prized, I will submit to the loss rather than retain confidence at the expense of the public good. If, as I said before, our general policy is objectionable—if it is not conservative, if we are injuring the rights of property or the prerogatives of the Crown—if we are undermining either civil or sacred institutions, prove that we have done so, and withhold your confidence from us. The hon. gentleman has referred to the relations in which I stood to the late Mr. Canning; but if he thinks upon that account he is fairly entitled to withhold his confidence and respect from me, he ought not to have waited for a quotation from a poem of



Mr. Canning's to open his eyes to my misfortune. The hon. gentleman must have been perfectly aware, in the year 1841 and subsequently, of my relations towards Mr. Canning, and of the course I pursued with regard to that eminent and distinguished statesman; and the knowledge of that course, and not an accidental quotation from a poem, ought to have lost me the hon. gentleman's confidence and respect at a much earlier period. But, as I said before, it is not my intention to reciprocate personalities with the hon. gentleman. I do not wish in the slightest degree to fetter his independence, or the independence of any other man who may sit upon this side of the House; but again I repeat, that being in the position which I fill, I will pursue that course which I believe to be for the public interest; and if, in pursuing it, I subject myself to the hon. gentleman's vituperation, or to the much heavier penalty of diminished confidence upon the part of others, that penalty I am ready to pay, and submit to the consequences.

The House divided on the question, that the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question:—Ayes, 188; Noes, 113; majority 75.

## INCOME AND PROPERTY TAX.

MARCH 10, 1845.

The report on the property-tax bill was brought up. On the question that the amendments be read a second time, Mr. C. Buller proposed an amendment to the effect that, as it was improbable the tax would be discontinued at the end of three years, the House would take care that it should be imposed in a form in which its operation would be less unequal and inquisitorial than it now is.

SIR ROBERT PEELE: Sir, before I address myself to the particular motion which the hon. and learned gentleman the member for Liskeard has brought under the consideration of the House, I wish to notice a few of the observations that have been made in the course of this evening's discussion upon points not immediately connected with the motion of the hon. and learned gentleman. And first, as to the speech of the hon. member for Lambeth, whom I am sorry not to see in his place. It appears to me from that speech that the hon. gentleman did not very well understand the financial statement which I made on a former evening. The hon. gentleman objects to the imposition of the income-tax, that there is no necessity for it, because he is of opinion that I showed that there would be such a surplus of income over expenditure as would enable us to provide for the service of the year, and dispense with the income-tax altogether; and the hon. gentleman says I calculated that on the 5th of April, 1846, there would be a surplus revenue of £1,400,000.—[Mr. Hawes returned to his seat.] Sir, I was noticing the counter-budget which was proposed by the hon. gentleman; I was going to discuss the hon. gentleman's propositions, but upon this occasion, as upon all former occasions when I have discussed these questions, I mean to discuss them simply on their merits. I shall abstain from all observations of a party character, and consider the proposition on its intrinsic merits. I was noticing the hon. gentleman's reasons for opposing the measure of the government, and attempting to show that I do not think he very well understands the purport of the financial statement which I made. The hon. gentleman says I showed that on the 5th of April, 1846, there would be a surplus of £1,400,000, and he states that that surplus of £1,400,000 would enable us to remove the duty upon cotton, to remove the duty upon glass, and the auction duty. [An hon. member: No; the duty upon coals.] Now, I was not aware that we should have to enter into a discussion on the general question of the budget, and I must speak, therefore, to a great extent from memory. On the 5th of April, 1846, supposing the income-tax to be continued by parliament, I think you would have a net revenue amounting to £53,700,000; but in that £53,700,000 would be included £600,000 to be received from China; and supposing parliament should not continue the income-tax, you must deduct £2,600,000 from the revenue on that account. You certainly would be entitled to add to the ordinary permanent revenue in the present year £2,600,000, because there is one-half year's property-tax to be received; and consequently on the 5th of April,

1846, you would have a revenue of £51,100,000; that is, supposing the property-tax not to be continued. Deduct from that £51,100,000 the amount of the Expenditure, which I think would be £49,600,000, if the House should approve of the estimates we lay before it, and in that case you would have on the 5th of April, 1846, £1,400,000 surplus. But if the income-tax be discontinued, that surplus almost entirely disappears. The hon. gentleman cannot calculate upon applying £1,400,000 to the remission of duties corresponding in amount with that sum, because that surplus will be derived from the half-year's property tax yet to be received in the present year. Now, the hon. gentleman seems to be rather bewildered on account of the amount of balance in the exchequer on the 5th of April, 1845, and says, you admit that there will be a balance of £5,000,000 in the receipts of the present year as compared with the expenditure, and, surely, that could be carried forward to the expenditure of the next year. [Mr. Hawes: A portion of it]. Well, a portion of it. But I apprehend that surplus will be thus applied—first, £2,000,000 of it will be applied to the payment of exchequer bills issued for opium compensation. Another portion of it will be applied under the Acts of Parliament to the reduction of the national debt. A portion of it, certainly, goes to increase the balance in the exchequer, and in that respect we are in a more favourable position than in the previous year; but I apprehend that that increased balance in the exchequer will only relieve you from the necessity of borrowing money from the bank, and that is not fairly applicable to the diminution of the expenditure for the year. Therefore I must say that the hon. gentleman's calculations and his reasons for opposing the continuance of the income-tax are really without foundation. The hon. member for Montrose says, that I declared it was not my intention to propose any alteration of the property-tax, and that therefore it was useless to discuss these amendments. I tell the hon. gentleman that I shall feel myself bound to state my reasons for opposing any amendment; but I think the better course will be to consider and discuss such amendments when they are brought forward, than to state them upon the motion of the hon. and learned member for Liskeard: for the hon. member, in bringing forward his proposition, studiously abstained from noticing any of them. He merely said "vote for my proposition," and his speech was directed against the whole of our financial course. The hon. gentleman ought to have concluded with a motion condemnatory of the income-tax, and not with a motion recommending some small modifications. If the hon. and learned gentleman had other modifications to suggest, why not state the nature of them? Why should he purposely abstain from any reference to them? Why make a motion pointing to modifications, and make a speech that had no allusion to them? I hope the House will not commit themselves on the details, until they have heard the particular proposition; because I think that when they come to consider the policy of making amendments in the existing law, the more these amendments are discussed, the more will they doubt the expediency of them. I will take that one which appears to be considered by many hon. gentlemen the most plausible and specious; that is, the motion of my hon. friend the member for the university of Oxford, who proposes that an income of £150 a year shall, as it has been called, be the zero of taxation. But if the suggestion of the hon. baronet were adopted, it would go much further than he intended. The proposition of my hon. friend is, that supposing a person was worth £200 a-year, he should only pay income-tax upon £50. Now, that proposition means practically this, that every man who now contributes to the income-tax shall deduct from the payment which he makes the sum he now pays for £150 of his income. That sum, in round numbers, is £4 10s. The meaning of my hon. friend, then, is, that every man, whatever the amount of his income now assessed to the income-tax, shall be enabled to recover from the exchequer a deduction of £4 10s. from the amount he has actually paid. I have no means of ascertaining the exact number, but I should say that there are not less than 200,000 persons who pay the tax. And under the proposal of my hon. friend every person who pays would be entitled to deduct £4 10s. from his payment for the year. That would amount to nearly £1,000,000. But, observe, this would not be a deduction, it would be a claim for repayment. The payment must be made in the first instance; to prevent that would be impossible; and he who can show that he is

entitled to receive back the £4 10s. must state what his income is, and he will then receive the sum. Why, that is totally altering the whole plan. In that case every man would be obliged to state what his income is, and a new process must be introduced for the purpose of ascertaining its amount. At present you do not require persons to state what their incomes are in many cases; but if you permit any man not to deduct but to reclaim £4 10s. from what he has paid, you must then institute a new species of tribunal for the purpose of recovering the amount. If the suggestion of my hon. friend were adopted, the total loss would be little short of £1,000,000, by which you would relieve persons of small incomes, but at the same time you would extend relief also to those who have no claim for relief. Now, I do hope the House will seriously consider before they allow such a deduction as this from the amount of the tax. I now come to the main question, whether or no we shall affirm a resolution which, in point of fact, is condemnatory of the plan of her Majesty's government. Though it does not suggest any modifications, it still requires that the tax shall be conducted upon a less inquisitorial mode. The hon. gentleman does not point out the nature of the modification he wishes to have adopted; but he asks the House to affirm a general resolution, leaving it to others to execute that resolution as best they may. There is no doubt, though this is an advanced stage of the property-tax bill, that it is perfectly open to the House to consider whether the general principals of the financial scheme of her Majesty's government shall be affirmed or not. The right hon. gentleman mistook me in supposing that I taunted those who sit opposite with any inconsistency for now supporting an income-tax to which they stated strong objections when originally proposed. I think it perfectly open to those who may have objected to the tax when we brought it forward in 1842, now to consent to its continuance in preference to any other tax raising even a more limited amount. They find the tax established; and a process devised and in existence for raising it. It raises perhaps a larger sum than may be requisite; but seeing that some additional taxation is necessary for the purpose of providing for the public service and maintaining the public credit, it is perfectly open now for consideration whether it be not a lesser evil to continue that tax which is in existence, than to devise some new and possibly, in proportion to the amount, more onerous system of taxation. The imposition of this tax, no doubt, will give more than you require for the purpose of maintaining the public credit, and meeting the exigencies of the country, provided for by annual votes; and it is open to the House to consider whether it be expedient to raise that additional sum for the purpose of effecting a commutation of taxes. The additional sum will be a large one; it will not certainly be less than £3,400,000 after providing for the increased estimates which will be proposed; and it is possible, certainly, that the amount might be raised by other means. If you choose to impose a tax of twopence instead of a penny on each letter going through the post-office, you might raise a considerable sum of money by that means. I do not think, certainly, that past experience would lead us to impose any additional duty of £5 per cent. on imports. Yet sufficient might be raised to meet the increase in your navy estimates, and sufficient to prevent any injury to public credit; and the question is quite within your province to decide, "Will you raise this additional sum by means of an income-tax, and apply the surplus to the reduction of other taxation?" I will not revive to-night the discussion upon the sugar duties. The House has by a very large majority affirmed the proposition of the government. Many hon. gentlemen contested the policy of a discriminating duty, taking a widely different view from her Majesty's government upon the subject. Still the question has been fully discussed; the sense of the House upon it has been made known, and it is in favour of the discriminating duty proposed by the government. There must of course be some future decision. There must be some act conveying the final determination of the House upon a proposal of that nature; but I consider the sense of the House to be in favour of that proposal, and the subject to be exhausted as far as discussion is concerned, and therefore I will not revive it now. But, supposing there should be a loss of £1,300,000 next year by the reduction of the sugar duties, still there would be a surplus remaining of £2,000,000, in respect of which no discussion or decision has yet taken place. And it is the proposed appropriation of that surplus of £2,000,000, against which a portion of the speech of the hon. gentleman is directed.

The hon. gentleman disclaims that! Why, what was the meaning of all the waggery of the hon. gentleman? [Mr. C. Buller: I have admitted the reduction on sugar.] What I am stating is, that the hon. gentleman not only quarrelled with our proposition in respect to sugar, but he distinctly attempted to show that the remaining surplus of £2,000,000 might be much better applied than in the manner proposed by her Majesty's government. We propose to apply that remaining surplus of £2,000,000 in the following manner:—We propose to remove altogether the duty upon raw cotton. We propose to remove altogether the excise duty on glass, and to abolish those restrictions which are more onerous than the pecuniary imposition itself, and which prevent the application of capital and skill to the manufacture of glass. We propose also to remove the duty upon auctions; and the duty upon 350 or 360 articles, which now enter the customs' tariff; making altogether a reduction of taxation to the amount of £2,000,000 and upwards. I still remain of opinion that it would be very difficult to apply the remaining surplus of £2,000,000 in any manner better calculated to revive and encourage the industry of this country, and to confer permanent benefit upon all classes in it, than by the remission of taxation which we propose. Some gentlemen appeared by their smiles to share in the objections of the hon. member to the reduction of the cotton duties. But before the intentions of her Majesty's government were made known, I had the honour of receiving some of those gentlemen as a deputation from the cotton manufacturers; and nothing then could be more earnest than their recommendations for the removal of the cotton duties. The hon. gentleman has calculated the advantage which would be derived by the labourer who wears fustian, or the woman who wears two gowns in the course of a year; he said that the repeal of the duty would give them about 3d. a-year; and, therefore, the hon. gentleman scouted the notion that any public advantage will accrue from the removal of the cotton duty, not positively, but as compared with other taxes which the hon. gentleman says might be remitted. It is necessary that I should remind the House and the country of the grounds upon which we proposed to remove the duty on cotton. In the first place, no doubt, by the removal of this tax there will be a facility for the introduction of cotton at the place of import greatly superior to that which now exists. But then we were told, and told with truth, when the question was still doubtful what taxes should be remitted—that there was no tax more unequal in its operation than the duty upon raw cotton. We were told that, with respect to muslin, the amount of duty was scarcely appreciable; but that upon those articles which entered into the consumption of the labouring classes the amount of duty was not less than from 18 to 24 per cent. on their value. We were told also, and correctly, that in those countries which are our great competitors in cotton manufacturing—the United States, of course, among them—not only is there no duty upon raw cotton, but the greatest facilities are afforded for procuring the raw material. In Germany, I apprehend, there is no duty upon raw cotton; in Switzerland, I believe there is no duty upon raw cotton; in France, I believe there is a duty upon that article, but there is a corresponding drawback allowed on manufactured cotton. We were therefore told that our great competitors in the manufacture of cotton have the raw material free of duty; and that therefore in neutral markets they have great advantages over us—that at Valparaiso, Manilla, and China, they do compete with us, and with great advantage, particularly in the manufacture of the heavier classes of cotton goods, on which the duty presses most heavily. Well, I look to the extent of our cotton manufactures. I see that the declared value of the exports from this country last year amounted to £50,000,000 sterling, and I see that cotton manufactures alone amounted to £25,000,000 sterling. Thus, taking the declared value, we find that one-half of the value of the exports from this country in the year 1844 was of cotton goods manufactured in the country in the same year. That great branch of our manufacture is now in a prosperous state; but when I look to that amount, when I see how closely interwoven the continued prosperity of that branch of manufacture is with the welfare and strength of this country, I must say, notwithstanding the present prosperity, it is, in my opinion, wise to reduce a duty which amounts to eight or twelve per cent. upon the raw material; and thereby enable us to continue with a prospect of greater success our competition in neutral markets with those countries which are now our most formidable rivals. Therefore upon that ground—upon the ground of

the importance of the manufacture, and upon that of the admitted impolicy of having a duty upon the raw material—upon the consideration, too, that this duty presses with no severity upon articles worn by the rich, while it presses with peculiar severity upon the coarser articles worn by the poor, we propose, and our sentiments with respect to that policy are not changed, that the sum of £650,000 surplus revenue shall be applied to the reduction of the duty upon cotton wool. But if you think the remission of that tax unwise, propose that some tax in competition with it shall be removed. Tell us what that tax is. Say whether you think it more wise to reduce the tax upon tobacco, or upon tea, to the extent of £650,000 than upon raw cotton, and we will enter into a discussion with you upon the subject of their relative merits; but we will do so in the fullest confidence that the ultimate decision of the House would be in favour of our proposition. Well, then, with respect to the duty on glass, I think the hon. gentleman did admit that the remission of the duty on that article was politic. No doubt there was no great clamour raised in favour of the abolition of that duty. Moreover, I tell the hon. gentleman I very much doubt whether the chief manufacturers of glass at all rejoice at the removal of the duty on that article. It has, therefore, been said, you have selected articles for the remission of duty about which nobody has clamoured, and you are doing that which you were not called upon to do. Now, so far from the fact of the great manufacturers being quite content at having the duty retained being a reason for retaining the duty, it is, in my opinion, one of the strongest arguments in favour of the abolition of the duty; and I say that by the 5th of April next year you will find that a great competition amongst glass manufacturers will have arisen. It is a great mistake to suppose that great capital and enormous edifices are required to manufacture glass. But if you leave the duty as it now is, the possessors of large capital and the owners of those great edifices now in use will have a manifest advantage over all the rest of the manufacturers of that article; and they have a distinct interest, therefore, in taking no part to promote the reduction of the duty. But I believe that they also will receive great advantage from the change, and that they will be able to compete with smaller capitalists. They will have the advantage of increased demand. But still their ready acquiescence in the existence of the tax is no argument in favour of its retention. But what really is the case with respect to glass? The total average of yearly exports in that article does not amount to £400,000. Remove the duty altogether, and permit the free manufacture of glass, and I believe you will establish a manufacture, of less importance indeed than that of cotton, but a manufacture which is to be the source of increased industry, increased profit, and increased commerce with other countries. The hon. gentleman was particularly merry on the subject of fustians. Now, with all respect for his abilities, I think it was hardly worthy of him to select four or five articles with odd names—"divi-divi," and such like—and then to ridicule the supposed advantages which the labouring classes in particular would derive from the remission of the tax upon those articles. It is very easy to say that the poor will derive no advantage from the remission of these taxes; but the former charge against the government was this: "You complicate your tariff by retaining upon it some 500 articles, from which you derive no revenue. There is no object in retaining them; it is merely the love of intermeddling with the commerce of the country that induces you to retain those articles in the tariff." We feel the force of that objection, and we reply, we will strike them out. Then the hon. gentleman steps in and thinks it worthy of him to say, what is the use of removing those articles? and he makes the House merry by referring to certain articles in the tariff with hard names, and asks what benefit does the country derive from the removal of the duty upon those articles? My answer to the hon. gentleman is, that in the 430 articles, the duties on which are remitted, are included many raw materials which are the elements of our own manufactures. The hon. gentleman says, you permit alum to be brought in duty free, that bread may be the more readily adulterated. I tell the hon. gentleman, if he be ignorant of it, that alum is an article which enters into the most important manufactures of this country; and, perhaps, there is no article with respect to which I have received more urgent applications for a reduction of duty than alum. We import alum from China; and we are continually told how desirable it is to extend our commercial relations with that country, and receive in return for our manufactures some other

article besides tea. There is in China a manufacture of alum; and there is a chance of opening and extending trade with China in that article. I believe the supply of alum brought from the Roman States and Syria is very limited. Three or four cwt. was all that was received within the last few months. It was of an inferior kind, but still it was a commencement. Under these circumstances we propose to remove the duty on alum, and this is the return which the hon. gentleman makes—"You remove the duty on alum in order that there may be fresh means of adulterating bread." We propose to remove the duty upon bark, upon skins, upon oils, upon indigo, upon all dyestuffs, and altogether on 430 articles, and not merely upon dividivi—upon articles which are of great importance to the manufactures of this country. The total amount of loss is £330,000 which, considering that the reduction is upon the raw material of manufactures, is, I think, well applied. If the hon. gentleman thinks differently, let him propose the remission of that tax he would prefer; and, meeting the hon. gentleman on that ground, I should not despair of having the sanction of the House to the removal of those articles from the tariff, and to the simplification which we propose of the customs. Last year, when we had no surplus, we were asked to reduce the duty upon staves. Nothing would have been more easy than to show that the agricultural labourer would derive very little direct advantage from the remission of the duty upon staves. If the hon. gentleman calculated the benefit derivable from it to an agricultural family, he will be able to show that it is less than 3d., the amount he says they will receive from the reduction of the duty on cotton wool. But is that the way in which we should estimate the matter? It was said, last year, by retaining the duty on staves, you are injuring an important branch of manufactures. You are destroying the trade of the cooper. You have opened the West Indies to a free competition with him in American staves; you permit them to be brought without payment of duty, but, by your timber duties, imposing a tax on the raw material—namely, staves from the United States and the Baltic, you are destroying the trade of the cooper. Remove the duty upon staves, and your cooperage trade will revive; the coopers will be able, by skill and peculiar advantages, to compete with America and other countries. Well, then, is it any test of the utility of the measure to say that the agricultural labourer will derive only a small benefit from the abolition of the duty on staves? You will enable your coopers to compete with advantage with the coopers of other countries, and you will confer a benefit which, taken in conjunction with other similar benefits, will operate advantageously and tend to improve the condition of the labourer. What did we hear last year with respect to the duty on wool? For three or four successive years we were urged to take off the duty on sheep's wool, and the right hon. gentleman may recollect the description which was then given of the woollen manufactures of this country. We felt ourselves that the earliest opportunity should be taken of applying any surplus to take off the duty on wool. Well, you removed the duty when there was scarcely any surplus; the woollen manufacture has improved, and an increase of price in your own domestic produce is the result. Every argument which applied to the reduction of duty on foreign wool, applies with equal force to the reduction of the duty on cotton wool. Having removed the duty on foreign sheep's wool, there is an additional argument for the removal of the duty on cotton wool, so that both branches of manufacture may compete with each other. That disposes of £600,000 of our surplus. The remaining duty which we propose to remove is the auction duty. I admit that there was no clamour for the removal of that duty; but I must say, if ever there was a tax unjust in its operation, it is the tax upon the transfer of property by auction. I ask the hon. gentleman to look at the exemptions from that tax—that is, what are the cases in which they originate. Let him look to the amount of property charged with respect to which an account is taken. The chief effect of the operation of the duty is to give an opportunity to the seller of an estate to ascertain its value, and, having so ascertained the value of the estate, he disposes of it by private contract. Thus, all your establishments with respect to this tax are kept up not for the purpose of revenue, but to enable parties to ascertain the value of their property. With respect to the sales of Colonial produce, the great importer is free from the operation of the auction duty, but the humbler retail trader is subject to it. Talk of the injustice of the income-tax! what is it when compared to the injustice of the auction duty? It is a tax which falls upon the humbler classes of the community, when

they have no option but to dispose of their goods by auction. But I understand the proposition for the removal of this duty is to be opposed. I understand a proposition is to be made for removing the duty on marine insurances instead. I should be glad to hear the reasons for that from the right hon. gentleman opposite. [Mr. F. Baring: I said there were other duties which I would prefer removing to the auction duty.] I cannot deny that there are other duties which it might be advisable to remove. It is impossible, looking to the taxes of this country, not to admit that strong reasons may be urged for the repeal of duties which it is not in our power to repeal. I know it is no conclusive argument in favour of those duties to say that the auction duty is an unjust burden; but in preferring their removal to the removal of the auction duty, you ought to show that they are greater burdens. I think the general voice of the country is in favour of the selection we have made; and when you come to discuss them in relation to other duties competing for repeal, I cannot help thinking that the general sense of the House will remain what I understood to be—that, upon the whole, the duties were taken off for the purpose of encouraging industry, and conferring a benefit, not upon one class only, but upon the country at large. I quite admit that if we were to deal with some taxes on articles of consumption, a more immediate benefit might be derived, and might be more sensibly felt by the working classes; but I entreat the House to bear in mind what the effect is of removing taxes that bear on the industry of the country. Look to the amount of your poor, and observe that the poor-rates have of late years been increasing. Find employment for the people in manufactures, and you will be reducing that great burden. If you compare the reduction of the duty upon some great article of consumption with the reduction of the duty upon cotton or glass, you must bear in mind that, though the immediate benefit to the consumer may be less in the case of cotton or glass than in the case of soap or other articles that I might name, yet, if you are ensuring a great branch of manufacture against vicissitude, against such distress as visited us in 1840 and 1841—if you are by removing the duty on glass giving a new scope for employment, I say you are taking effectual means for diminishing the risk of increasing the charge on account of the poor. I will not at present enter into the merits of the question of direct taxation. We propose to continue the income-tax for three years; and the hon. gentleman seems to take so sanguine a view of this country generally, that I think he must contemplate the possibility of its removal at the end of that period. When that period arrives the House may determine whether or not the tax can be dispensed with—whether direct taxation can, in any shape or modification, be continued in preference to indirect taxation. I and my colleagues have a sanguine impression that it is for the interest of the country to continue the income-tax for the period mentioned, in order that we may make the proposed experiment respecting those taxes which do press heavily upon the industry, the skill, and the capital of the country. When I look to the amount of our foreign trade last year, not speaking of the internal consumption, which was stimulated by a good harvest, and compare it with the trade of 1843—when I find that in 1843 it was £46,500,000, and that in 1844 it rose to £50,000,000, I do retain the sanguine hope that the removal of those restrictions upon your manufactures will still further extend your internal industry and your external commerce. Although there is an absolute remission of taxes, although we cannot, as in the case of coffee or other articles, expect an immediate benefit therefrom, and although those taxes being absolutely removed, will cease to be a source of revenue, still if their removal should increase the manufacturing prosperity of the country, that removal will, if not directly, at least indirectly, affect the revenue; it will cause an increased consumption; and although in these particular taxes you must relinquish the hope of revenue, yet by the general prosperity bearing upon the general consumption, there is, I think, a rational hope, that your revenue will compensate you for that loss. Sir, when we last proposed this tax, there was a consideration which has not been adverted to in the course of this debate. I think the noble lord objected to any alteration of detail, being unwilling to impair the effect of this great instrument, which we considered to have been called for by the circumstances of the country; while the hon. gentleman admits that there has been no petition against it—circumstances which I think show that the measure has upon the whole been less onerous than was expected, and that the inquisition necessary to establish it has been con-

ducted, through the great skill and intelligence of the executive officers, and in particular those in the stamp department, with that valuable public servant, Mr. Presley, at their head—has been conducted with much less of injustice and of oppression than might have been anticipated. It is a matter well worthy of observation, that notwithstanding the continuance of this tax there has been no diminution of the receipts from other sources of direct taxation; for example, the assessed taxes have not been lessened by the operation of the income-tax. Again, there has not been one petition against the tax. I therefore do hope that the House will still remain of the same favourable opinion which it has hitherto entertained with respect to the income-tax; and that the House will permit the tax to be continued unaltered and without modification. I say without modification, for I do maintain that any attempt at modification would be attended with the utmost risk. I have called it an income-tax, because I do not deny that it is an income-tax; and, looking upon it in that light, I frankly acknowledge that I am not prepared to face the difficulties which must necessarily attend any attempt to estimate the value of different annuities. If we made any attempt of that kind, we must ascertain the liability of every man to disease; we must inquire into the state of his health; we should therefore not get rid of the inquisition which has been made the subject of such loud and earnest complaint; and, moreover, the difficulties of discriminating between permanent sources of income and temporary sources of income would be interminable. On these grounds, then, I do hope the House will approve of the tax as it stands, without alteration or modification.

Mr. Buller's amendment negatived by a majority of 128. The amendments were read and agreed to.

## AGRICULTURAL INTEREST.

MARCH 17th, 1845.

In the debate on Mr. W. Miles' motion, "That it is the opinion of this House that in the application of surplus revenue, due regard should be had to the necessity of affording relief to the agricultural interest"—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said, I shall in a very few sentences state the grounds on which I feel it my duty to offer my opposition to the motion which has been made by my hon. friend. I oppose that motion, because the object of it being merely to transfer a certain sum from the county rate to the consolidated fund, in my opinion we should practise a delusion upon the agricultural interest by impressing them with the belief that such a measure can in any material degree operate to their benefit. My hon. friend states that the total amount of relief which he means to propose is about £250,000 or £260,000, not an absolute remission of taxation falling upon agriculture, but merely the transfer of that amount, payable in England from the county rate, to the consolidated fund. Now, supposing in that way my hon. friend gave an absolute relief of £250,000 to the agricultural interest, even if it were total and unqualified, the absolute amount to each individual would be scarcely appreciable. But my hon. friend must recollect it is a mere transfer of a charge from one species of taxation to another; my hon. friend must recollect, if he concedes this relief to the agriculture of England, he must concede, where it can be done, a corresponding relief to agriculture in Scotland and Ireland. The consequence will be, therefore, that a charge of, perhaps, £350,000 or £400,000 must be placed on the consolidated fund. Now, I have a strong impression that, if placed on the consolidated fund, the check put on expenditure would be much less efficient than it is at present; and that government, acting through its officers, probably to be newly appointed, would have much smaller means of exercising local vigilance than those who are now by the local authorities appointed to superintend this charge. To obtain, therefore, a relief in England of £250,000 of direct taxation on the county rates, there must be a transfer to the consolidated fund of nearly £400,000, with the prospect of continued increase to be placed on that fund. But who are the contributors to that fund? The consolidated fund means neither more nor less than the produce of taxation to which the agriculturists contribute. My hon. friend says that this removal of taxation, now placed on the county rate, would be a relief to



the lower class of farmers and peasants; but do not the lower class of farmers and peasants contribute by indirect taxation to the consolidated fund? Consequently it would be a mere commutation of taxation; and my firm belief is, that the agricultural interest, which my hon. friend intends to benefit, would derive no substantial relief. My hon. friend, however, proposes that as his object; and I rather think that my hon. friend would receive support from others who mean acquiescence in the motion to be tantamount to a condemnation of the financial proposals made by her Majesty's government; because I find that in a circular which has been issued from the Protection of Agriculture Society, gentlemen are expressly invited to vote for this motion, upon the ground that the remission of taxation which I propose is not favourable to the agricultural interest, and that the motion of my hon. friend ought to be acquiesced in for the express purpose of effectually resisting further progress of the government in measures of free trade. If, therefore, that be the ground upon which my hon. friend brings forward his motion, or others are inclined to support it, still less is it in my power to acquiesce in the motion of my hon. friend. I have had placed in my hands the following letter, addressed to a member of this House, soliciting his support to the motion of my hon. friend, and upon rather a different ground from that upon which he puts his motion. This letter is from a local Protection Society, and is addressed by the secretary to a member of this House. It is to this effect:—"I am directed to inform you that a communication from the Central Protection Society was laid before our managing committee yesterday, of which the following is a copy:—'That it is the opinion of this committee that a remission of several of the duties which Sir Robert Peel proposes to abolish in his remission of taxation, would tend materially to lessen the employment of the agricultural labourer, and to reduce the price of various productions of the soil. That the principle on which the Agricultural Protection Society is based is, to maintain a protection to British agriculture, not less than that which existed at the time of its formation; and this committee, therefore, recommend all the Provincial Protection Societies to urge, by deputations or otherwise, their local representatives in parliament to support Mr. Miles' motion, and to use their best endeavours to arrest the progress of these free-trade measures.'"

Their appeal, therefore, is clearly made not for the purpose of gaining a small remission of local burdens to the amount of £250,000 for the agricultural interest—it is made expressly for the purpose of arresting the further progress of those measures which it is the intention of her Majesty's government to introduce, and to imply a censure and a condemnation of their financial policy. Whether, therefore, the grounds for supporting this motion be those urged by my hon. friend, or those stated in this letter from the central protection society, inviting members to support the motion, with the view of arresting the progress of the measures proposed by her Majesty's government, it is entirely out of my power to acquiesce in the motion of my hon. friend. Sir, this House has given its consent to the income-tax; this House has by a large majority, consented to the continuance of a tax by which a sum of £5,200,000 is to be raised on the property and income of the country. I do not believe that a continuance of that tax would have been acquiesced in by the public—I do not believe that it would have received the sanction of this House, if the proposal for its continuance had not been accompanied by a declaration of the intention of the government in respect to their financial policy. I conceive, therefore, were I to acquiesce in a motion of this kind, which must be admitted necessarily to imply a complete disturbance of that financial policy, I should be acting with gross bad faith, having proposed the income-tax, if I were to consent to a measure which would render me unable to fulfil the conditions on which it was proposed. If £400,000 are to be placed on the consolidated fund, it is quite clear, with the present amount of surplus we contemplate for some time to come, it will be impossible to persevere in the whole of the financial measures we have brought forward. We are not prepared to submit to an immediate and certain deficit to the amount to which it must exist in the event of the success of my hon. friend; and I have a right, therefore, to consider the motion of my hon. friend as a censure and a condemnation of our financial policy. Sir, I cannot say I at all repent of the course which has been pursued by her Majesty's government since their accession to office. I look now at the condition of this country, and at its condi-

tion at the period when we assumed power. I remember the statements which were made with regard to the position of the agricultural interest; with regard to the prospects of commerce; with regard, I believe, to the condition of the labouring classes who were dependent on their industry for support in the manufacturing districts of this country. I think I recollect hearing from the hon. gentleman opposite, that in the town he represents—the town of Sheffield—there were not less than 3,000 houses unoccupied. I recollect the touching accounts which were given of the condition of the labouring classes in the manufacturing districts—the accounts of the struggles which were made even to procure a scanty sustenance from animals which had died of disease. I recollect that case to which I before referred—the case of the town of Paisley, where, during the winter of 1841, there were not less than 12,000 persons—at one time not less than 17,000 who rose in the morning uncertain where they were to procure the subsistence of the day, excepting by voluntary charity. Looking at these things, I do not consider that I am bound to support the partial interests of any individual class. I consider, Sir, that it is the duty of the government to take, as far as their abilities permit, a comprehensive view of the interests of all classes; and I now believe that it is for the interest of all classes, but more especially for the interest of agriculture, that something has been done to reanimate and revive, if possible, the manufacturing interest. And I ask you now to consider not the effect which the importation of 3,000 or 4,000 head of cattle or of swine may produce upon the prices of agricultural produce, but I wish you to take into your consideration what would have been the effect of a diminished demand of 40,000 head of cattle arising from continued distress throughout the manufacturing districts. I do not believe that agricultural prosperity could co-exist with the continuance of that manufacturing distress. But we are now told that, notwithstanding our reduction, notwithstanding the remissions we have made, to the amount of five or six millions, in taxes bearing upon the productive industry of the country—that we deserve no credit for it—that all indications of a recurrence of prosperity are disbelieved and denied—the revival of manufacturing activity is entirely owing to good harvests. But I remember when we were told that confidence in the recurrence of better seasons was utterly misplaced—that there was no hope for the revival of manufactures and commerce—that our measures were mere delusions—and that unless we took the agricultural produce of other countries our markets could not be extended, and that it was illusory to hold out any hope of improvement, or that the sufferings of the people could be mitigated. Well, but improvement has taken place. I wish hon. gentlemen would read some of the trading circulars issued at the commencement of the present year, and compare them with the trading circulars issued in 1842, and compare them, too, at the same time, with the predictions of approaching ruin that were then made. Here is one of those circulars issued on the 1st of January in the present year:—“The improvement, indeed, in manufacturing property has far exceeded all expectation; the transactions of the year present one unbroken series of remunerating prices for goods, and a very moderate cost of the raw material. At this season it has been usual to expect temporary stagnation; but at the moment all is activity. The spinners are full of orders, and steam power is taxed to the utmost to fulfil contracts. The woollen districts have much improved in condition, and may be pronounced to be busily and advantageously employed. The stocks of manufactured goods have been well taken off, and it is anticipated that the colonial wool sales next month will be very brisk, and very full prices be obtained.”

The circular then adds—and this is another proof of the wisdom of the fiscal policy pursued by her Majesty's government,—“There are no unsound speculations in merchandise, as in the memorable year 1825; nor in American securities, nor an enormous bill circulation, as before the last panic; and our monetary relations with foreign countries are altogether favourable. All these circumstances combined, again lead to the appearance of a moderate rate of interest for money.”

That is the account given in this circular at the commencement of the present year with respect to the commercial and manufacturing prosperity of the country. Now I ask you to contrast that with the state of the country in 1842, and, making all the allowances that you will make for favourable seasons, I ask you whether there is any ground for condemning the commercial and manufacturing policy which

has been adopted by her Majesty's government? Observe the bearing of this on agriculture,—“As a remarkable evidence,” says this circular, “of the increasing prosperity of the country, it is most interesting to notice that the quantity of wheat sold during the last four months at the towns whose returns are made for the purpose of compiling the averages, amounted to 2,128,692 quarters, being no less than 247,707 quarters more than the sales of the corresponding period in 1843; while the quantity of foreign corn upon which duty has been paid during the whole of 1844, is nearly identical with that of the previous year.”

Now, observe that the whole of that increased consumption is an increased consumption of wheat, the produce of this country, there being no increase in the import of foreign wheat, as the import of foreign wheat appears to correspond with that of the four corresponding months of the preceding year. Speaking of the consumption of those towns only where the averages are taken, we find that, in consequence of the improved condition of the manufacturing labourer, there is an increased consumption in them of 247,000 quarters of wheat in four months only. When, therefore, you say that our measures are calculated to increase the manufacturing activity of the country, and that the benefit of them is exclusively confined to manufactures, I give you this fact as a conclusive proof that there is derived from them a corresponding benefit to agriculture, because the demand for that part of our own produce which is of the utmost importance to agriculture—namely, wheat, is extended in a proportionate degree to the increased prosperity of manufactures and commerce. I oppose this motion in 1845 on the same grounds on which I opposed it in 1836. I then thought that it held out hopes of relief which were certain to be delusive. I differed from those with whom I was then acting, and I stated the grounds on which I opposed the motion. I said then, as I say now, that there is no tax bearing upon agriculture except the Malt-tax, in the power of government to remit; and I should have thought that my hon. friend would have reserved himself until the removal of the auction duty, or the duties upon glass or cotton were proposed, and then have brought forward, in competition with those remissions, a proposition for the remission of this tax bearing particularly upon agriculture, instead of merely suggesting a pecuniary bonus. Sir, I will not now enter upon the question of agricultural protection. It does not properly arise in this debate, and it will, moreover, be raised in a discussion which, as I understand, the hon. gentleman, the member for Wolverhampton, intends to raise in this House. I shall then be prepared to say why I think that the Corn-laws ought not to be abolished. At the same time I am not prepared to say that precisely the same amount of agricultural protection shall be maintained, if by that you mean that we are not at liberty to touch it in any revival of a tariff, as in regard to bark, or articles of that kind. I believe it is for the interest of the country that you should relax your prohibitory and restrictive laws with great caution. I do not say for the advantage of the agricultural interest, but for the advantage of all classes of the community. I am holding no new doctrine. I have ever professed my belief that the system of prohibition and extreme protection is wrong. I do not, as I said the other night, defend the protection given to the West India interest upon the principle of commercial policy; but seeing the long period for which it has endured, the amount of capital invested in the cultivation of the soil in the West Indies, the peculiar position of those colonies with respect to labour; seeing also our obligation to maintain our colonial empire; I have the strongest impression that the sudden and hasty removal of protection would be an injury not only to the West Indies, but to the whole of this great empire. We are now taunted by one side of the House with having seriously injured the agricultural interest, by the rapidity, the inconsiderate haste, with which the protection of that interest has been dealt with. On the other side of the House we are taunted with being mere instruments in the hands of the agricultural party; and we are told that we ought to proceed at once to the removal of all protection whatsoever. Sir, our intention is to pursue the course we have hitherto taken, without yielding to the suggestions of the one party or the other. We have attempted gradually to abolish prohibitory duties, and gradually to relax extreme protection. In my opinion we have done so with the best success. I look to the general results of our policy in the position of the country now, as compared with the position

in which we found it; and I say we are amply justified in the course we have pursued, and are encouraged to persevere in it. Sir, the hon. member for Shrewsbury repeats an accusation he made on a former occasion, of our having retained power by a forgetfulness of the pledges we gave in opposition. As I before said, I shall not enter into personal controversy. When I proposed the tariff in 1842, and when that charge, which the hon. member now repeats, was made against me, I find the hon. gentleman got up in his place, and stated that,—“With reference to the accusation made on the other side of the House, that the right hon. baronet at the head of the government had repudiated principles when in opposition which he had adopted when in office, that that charge had been made without due examination of the facts of the case.”

I find the same hon. gentleman again use these words :—“The conduct pursued by the right hon. baronet was in exact, permanent, and perfect consistency with the principles of free-trade laid down by Mr. Pitt. His reason for saying this much was to refute the accusations brought against the present government, that they had put forward their present views in order to obtain a change of government, so as to get into power themselves.”

These sentiments I find attributed to Mr. Disraeli. I do not know whether they are of sufficient importance to mention them in the House; but this I know, that I then held in the same estimation the panegyric with which I now regard the attack. I was certainly, however, so struck—remembering the former defence of the hon. gentleman—that the accusation which he made to-night should have proceeded from him, that I could not forbear alluding to it.

Motion negatived.

## MAYNOOTH COLLEGE.

APRIL 3, 1845.

On the motion of Sir R. Peel, the acts of the parliament of Ireland 35 George III., c. 23, and 40 George III., c. 85, and also 48 George III., c. 145, were read. The House then went into committee.

SIR ROBERT PEEL, addressing the chairman, said :—Mr. Greene, in the course of the last session of parliament, I took the opportunity of publicly declaring, on the part of her Majesty's government, that it was our intention during the recess to apply ourselves to the consideration of the state of academical education in Ireland. I accompanied that declaration with a distinct intimation that the circumstances and position of the Roman Catholic college of Maynooth should be included in that consideration. I added, that in undertaking the consideration of the state of Maynooth, it was our intention to undertake it in a spirit friendly and not adverse to the institution; and I made that public declaration at that time in order that due notice should be given of the intentions of her Majesty's government. I was not unprepared for the demonstration of opinion which has been made this day by the presentation of petitions. I could not look back to the discussions which have taken place in this House with respect to Maynooth, without foreseeing that a proposition for the extension of Maynooth was likely to encounter the risk of great opposition. I could not disguise from myself that many persons entertaining strong religious feelings and conscientious scruples, the sincerity of which cannot be questioned, and which on that account are entitled to respectful consideration,—I could not but foresee that any proposal for an increased grant to Maynooth was likely to encounter such an opposition as I have witnessed this day; and it was because we foresaw this, having to encounter difficulties of which we were fully sensible, but by which we were not deterred, we thought it our duty to take care that these difficulties should not be aggravated by a just allegation that we had concealed our intentions, and had taken the country by surprise. It was upon that account that, expressly and deliberately, I made the intimation to which I have referred in the course of the last session, not in vague and equivocal terms, but in terms distinctly indicating that the probable result of the consideration which we were pledged to give to the position of the college of Maynooth, would be an improvement in the system, accompanied with an increase of the public grant. In fulfilment of the pledge thus publicly given, we have, during the recess, taken this great subject of academical instruction in

Ireland into our consideration. I will say nothing now with respect to one portion of this question, which will be brought under the notice of the House at another period—I mean the extension of the means of academical education in Ireland apart from Maynooth. The observations I have to make on this day will be limited entirely to the question of Maynooth. The state of that college has undergone our deliberate consideration. We have reviewed the extent of any obligations, in point of honour and good faith, which past transactions and past acts of the legislature might, in our opinion, impose upon the executive government and parliament of the country in reference to this subject; we have considered the practical effect of the present system pursued at Maynooth, and the probable effect of any alteration in that system; and, having given to the whole subject the best consideration in our power, I now, on the part of the executive government, submit to the deliberate judgment of the House of Commons the proposal which we are prepared to make. Sir, it has appeared to us that we are at liberty to pursue one or other of three courses with respect to the institution of Maynooth. It is competent for us to continue without alteration the present system, and the present amount of the parliamentary grant. It is competent to us to discontinue the grant altogether,—to repudiate all connexion with Maynooth, and, after providing perhaps for the protection of existing interests, publicly to notify that there shall hereafter be no connexion between government and the college of Maynooth. That is the second, course which it is possible to pursue. The third course is to adopt in a friendly and generous spirit the institution provided for the education of the Roman Catholic priesthood—to extend the parliamentary provision for that purpose, and to attempt, not by interference with the doctrine or discipline of the Roman Catholic Church, but by a more liberal provision, to improve the system of education, and to elevate the tone and character of that institution. Any one of these three courses is open to us. With respect to the first—the continuance, without alteration or modification of any kind, of the present grant and the present system, it is our deliberate conviction, that of all courses that can be pursued, that would be the most pregnant with mischief. We profess to endow a national institution—we profess to make provision for the education of those who are to give spiritual instruction and religious consolation to many millions of the people of Ireland. We just give enough, by voting annually £9,000 a year, to discourage and paralyse voluntary contributions for that purpose. Remove the grant altogether, and you will find on the part of the people of Ireland, I have no doubt, a disposition to make the pecuniary sacrifice, and to provide some, perhaps an imperfect endowment, by voluntary contributions, for the education of their priesthood. But the grant of £9,000 a year, the undertaking on the part of the government to endow an institution and to provide instruction, has the effect of discouraging the contributions of others, while the allotted amount is wholly insufficient for its professed object. What then is our position? If it be a violation of principle to provide instruction for the Roman Catholic priesthood, we are guilty of that violation of principle now. A grant of £9,000 a year, professedly for the education of the Roman Catholic priesthood, is a violation of principle at least as great as any which I shall propose to the House. It is not merely that you make an annual grant to Maynooth: that is not the limit of your connexion with the institution. There are upon the statute book three acts of parliament, two passed by the Irish legislature before the union, and one passed in the year 1808, adopting and sanctioning this institution, for the support of which the annual grant is made. By the combined effect of these acts of parliament, you provide for the establishment of a college for the education of Roman Catholics only. You expressly use the phrase the “establishment” of a college. Whom have you appointed as the visitors of that college? Have you disclaimed connexion with that college? have you repudiated it as a guilty thing with which you will hold no communion? So far from it, you have appointed the lord chancellor and the highest judicial authorities as the visitors of this institution which you have so established. The lord chancellor and the judges are the visitors of that college. You provide only, it is true, by an annual vote, for the president, certain officers, and professors of that college; but the acts which have received your sanction expressly speak of “fellows,” of that college to be endowed. The acts originally contemplated a perfect system of collegiate education, consisting of scholars, of masters, of professors, and of

fellows. The president of the college must have the sanction of the Crown to his nomination. You have appointed a numerous body of trustees for the charge and superintendence of this college. You commit to their hands an annual parliamentary grant. The intention must have been to repeal the statute of mortmain in favour of the college. You have permitted the trustees to purchase or acquire real property to the amount of £1,000 per annum, for the purpose of providing for that college. By the Irish act you permitted them in the whole to hold real property to the extent of £1,000 a year. That was the result of the act of the Irish parliament; but in the year 1808 this imperial parliament recognised the institution so far as to make a further provision for it, enabling the trustees to make compromises of certain suits at law then depending, and to hold a still larger amount of real property than had been contemplated by the Irish parliament. You have enabled the trustees, by express enactment, to provide and assign a chapel in which the rites of the Roman Catholic church shall be celebrated by a chaplain to be appointed by the trustees. These are the enactments which have received the sanction of the legislature; and I ask whether I have not completely established that, if it be a violation of principle to recognise—to sanction—to provide for—the instruction of the Roman Catholic priesthood, that violation of principle has been deliberately committed by the government and parliament of this country? And what is the corresponding benefit which you gain? What is the practical compensation with which you counterbalance the moral evil? You cannot deny the fact, that you now endow professors teaching the doctrines of the Roman Catholic religion—training up candidates for the priesthood, for the inculcation of those doctrines. At Maynooth, supported by your grant, are ten professors—three of whom are professors of theology. Does it mitigate in any degree the violation of principle, that these professors are miserably endowed? that the maximum which they receive is £120 per annum? Surely, if you consent to endow theological professors at all, it is good policy to make such a provision as shall ensure the services of men of high character and attainments? I speak not with the slightest disrespect of any who are professors in that institution now—I am only arguing with respect to the general tendency of incompetent allowances. If men of high character and great attainments can be occasionally found ready, through zeal for their religion and for the interests of education, to devote their time to the cause of public instruction with incompetent salaries, that is no reason why we should not secure permanently the services of men of learning and ability by assigning that which is at least a decent provision for their maintenance. All I contend for now is, that we gain no compensation for our violation of principle by assigning so limited a pecuniary grant; that we provoke feelings of disgust and discontent at our parsimony in the minds of those to whom we commit the instruction of the Roman Catholic priesthood. In this institution there are now about 440 students, 250 of them we profess to maintain; the remainder are called pensioners, providing for their own maintenance. For the free students, namely, those on the foundation, an allowance is made from the parliamentary grant of about £23 per head. From this sum is to be provided the dress of the student, the scanty furniture of his apartment, and his commons; and from the aggregate balance that is left, the general expenses of the institution, the expenses of coals, candles, repairs, and such like charges, have to be defrayed. What is the state of the building of the college? and what are the feelings to which it is calculated to give rise in the minds of those young men who are educated there—feelings likely to survive in their after intercourse with the world? Nothing can be more desolate than the appearance of the building: it partakes more of the character of a deserted barrack than of a literary institution. With respect to the provision for the students, of whom there are 440 in some way or other receiving their education there, and professing to receive it through your liberality, I take it from the words of one who knows the fact from actual inspection, that it is impossible to assign to each of those students a separate room for his occupation—that in many cases several of them are placed in one room, for his occupation—that in many cases several of them are placed in one room, and even in some instances in one garret. Sir, a representation upon this subject was made to the executive by many, indeed I might with truth say, by almost the whole of the Roman Catholic prelaty; and I shall need no apology to the House if I read

that statement. It was addressed to the lord-lieutenant of Ireland:—"With sentiments of the most profound respect, we beg leave to state to your excellency, that the trustees of the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth have long been struggling under great embarrassments in directing the affairs of that establishment, on account of the inadequacy of its funds to the objects for which it was instituted. We beg to state that, for the purpose of carrying into effect, as far as they could, the benevolent object of the government in the establishment of Maynooth College, the said trustees ordered a rigidly parsimonious economy to be observed in the internal administration of the college, which not only reduced the salaries of the professors and administrators of it below the usual allowances for respectable clerks, but actually interfered with their comforts and conveniences to a degree unbecoming a public institution for the education of the ministers of religion. So urgent was the necessity of all possible retrenchment in order to compass the essential objects of the establishment, that the president has been frequently obliged to send home the students during the vacation, for the paltry but indispensable saving of two months' provision; which is attended with the great inconvenience of removing the students from the restraints of college discipline and superintendence, so necessary to be kept up during the short period of their ecclesiastical course, in order to render them proper and useful members of the priesthood; and, notwithstanding all this parsimonious management, a debt of £4,600 has been contracted. We beg leave further to state, that the increasing distresses in the country during the latter years have so affected the condition of the middle classes of society, from which candidates for the Roman Catholic priesthood are usually presented, that there has been a very considerable reduction in the number of those who pay for their support in the college, and a far greater reduction is to be apprehended—they have found it so difficult of late to pay the usual pensions after having incurred the heavy expense of preparatory education and outfit for the college. This decrease in the number of pensioners has not only created the necessity of a proportionable increase of free places on the establishment, but has deprived the economy of the college of the profits arising from pensions. To instance the total insufficiency of the present establishment for the wants it was intended to supply, the prelates are in many instances obliged to withdraw their respective students from the college, who had entered on their enlarged course of studies two years before the completion of that course; frustrating thereby, very reluctantly, the wise and benevolent views of government in establishing that foundation for the purpose of raising up a superior class of Roman Catholic priests, who would be qualified, by their talents and acquirements, to fill the vacant professorships in the college and the higher offices in the Church. To such embarrassments are the Roman Catholic Bishops reduced by the inadequate supply of priests from the establishment, that they are frequently necessitated to call home students for the performance of clerical duties, before they complete their ordinary theological course, which is already so short as to afford barely the knowledge essential for the performance of the clerical functions." (Signed by twenty-two Roman Catholic Prelates.)

Now I ask whether I am not right in contending that you can take no course which is not preferable to a continuance of this state of things; that is, to a continued violation of principle—if it be a violation of principle—in undertaking to instruct a priesthood from whose doctrines you dissent, and yet, at the same time, making only this niggardly and inadequate provision for the maintenance of those for whose education you have made yourselves responsible? This subject is now brought under our consideration, and decide upon it we must. Will it be wise—will it be just, to say to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, "We are bound, it is true, by an inconvenient obligation, contracted by our predecessors, and that obligation we will respect; in a surly spirit, we will continue to give you the usual grant of 9,000*l.* a year; but there shall be no improvement in your buildings—there shall be no advance in the salaries of your professors—the acts of parliament shall continue unrepealed and unaltered—our implied sanction and encouragement, so far as statute law is concerned, shall remain; and though we do not withhold the annual grant, we continue it with the feeling that our conscience is violated, and we give it you only because we have to fulfil an odious contract into which others entered, and from which we cannot escape?" Any course is preferable to this. I come, then,

to the consideration of another alternative. Shall we avow that our conscientious scruples are so violated in the maintenance of this system, that we will discontinue altogether the connexion with Maynooth; that the vote shall, after some temporary arrangements, be withdrawn, and the burden of educating the priesthood shall be thrown upon the people of Ireland? ["Hear, hear."] I infer that there are some who think that a desirable course. Before you adopt this course, I ask the House to listen to the statement I am about to make, and maturely to weigh the reasons which prevent me from counselling it. If this were a mere pecuniary engagement, from which you could not, without absolute injustice, stand released, you might possibly avoid the annual performance of it, by calculating the value of the annuity, converting it into capital, paying the amount to the trustees of the college, and notifying to them that on religious grounds you absolved yourselves from all further connexion with this institution. Apart from the obligation of good faith—apart from all consideration of the mortified and irritated feelings which might arise from an avowal on your part that conscientious scruples prevented you from continuing this vote; I do not hesitate to say, that I believe the absolute discontinuance of the vote would be better for all purposes than the continuance of the niggardly allowance you at present grant; but I think I can assign reasons which, if as legislators and statesmen you take into account, public feelings and considerations of public policy will dissuade you from taking that course, and from repudiating all connexion with this institution. When did your connexion with it arise? Under whose authority? How long has it been continued? For fifty years you have consented to continue the parliamentary vote for Maynooth. You commenced your connexion with it in the year 1795. The reigning sovereign was George III.; the minister of England was Mr. Pitt; the secretary of state for the home department was the Duke of Portland, who afterwards filled the office of chancellor of the university of Oxford. In the year 1795 the lord-lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Fitzwilliam, called the attention of the Irish parliament to the state of education in that country. That was a critical period, the year 1795. In a speech made to the Irish parliament, at the opening of the session of that year, the lord-lieutenant addressed them thus:—"We are engaged in an arduous contest; the time calls not only for great fortitude, and an unusual share of public spirit, but for much constancy and perseverance. You are engaged with a power which, under the ancient forms of its internal arrangement, was always highly formidable to the neighbouring nations. Lately this power has assumed a new shape, but with the same ambition, with much more extensive and systematic designs, far more effective, and without comparison more dreadful in the certain consequences of its eventual success; it threatens nothing less than the entire subversion of the liberty and independence of every state in Europe; an enemy to them all, it is actuated with a peculiar animosity against these kingdoms, not only as the natural protector of the balance of power in Europe, but also because, by the possession of a legal, humane, and rational freedom, we seem to reproach that false and spurious liberty which, in reality, is an ignominious servitude, tending to extinguish all good arts, to generate nothing but impiety, crime, disorder, and ferocious manners, and to end in wretchedness and general desolation. To guard his people from the enterprise of this dangerous and malignant power, and for the protection of all civilized society against the inroads of anarchy, his Majesty has availed himself of every rational aid, foreign and domestic; he has called upon the skill, courage, and experience of all his subjects, wheresoever dispersed."

In that same speech, made at that eventful epoch, the lord-lieutenant said to the Irish parliament:—"Attached as you are to the general cause of religion, learning, and civilisation, I have to recommend to your consideration the state of education in this kingdom, which in some parts will admit of improvement, in others may require some new arrangements. Considerable advantages have been already derived under the wise regulations of parliament from the Protestant charter schools, and these will, as usual, claim your attention; but, as these advantages have been but partial, and as circumstances have made other considerations connected with this important subject highly necessary, it is hoped that your wisdom will order every thing relating to it in the manner most beneficial, and the best adapted to the occasions of the several descriptions of men which compose his Majesty's faithful subjects in Ireland."



These expressions were meant to have reference to the institution of the College of Maynooth. Like all speeches on such occasions, they are necessarily general; but before the address in answer to that speech was voted—an address moved by Mr. Grattan—Mr. Grattan, on the part of the government, expressly said, referring to the paragraph in the speech relating to education:—"On this subject it is intended that a plan should be submitted for colleges for the education of the Catholic clergy, who are now excluded from the continent."

He supplied, therefore, whatever might be doubtful and vague in the speech of the lord-lieutenant; he told the House of Commons that it was intended to establish Maynooth; and with that distinct intimation of the intentions of the government, the Irish House of Commons and the House of Lords responded to the speech of the lord-lieutenant, and told him, in the spirit in which he recommended it, that they would consider the extension of education. Lord Fitzwilliam was succeeded by Lord Camden; and Lord Camden, as lord-lieutenant, laid the first stone of the College of Maynooth. At the close of the session, the college having been founded, the Marquess Camden, addressing the parliament, and thanking them for their liberality, stated to them:—"My lords and gentlemen—his Majesty observes with the highest satisfaction, that during the present crisis you have not failed to cherish and maintain the various sources of your internal prosperity. A wise foundation has been laid for educating at home the Roman Catholic clergy."

At the close of the session of the year 1795, the lord-lieutenant, who had presided at the inauguration of Maynooth, who had laid the first stone of the building, thus congratulated the parliament on its wisdom in founding a plan of domestic education for the Roman Catholic clergy. In the course of that year, 1795, the Irish parliament passed the first act relating to Maynooth; and that act was passed by the Irish Lords and Commons without a division, and without one dissentient voice. The prelates of the Protestant church were present in the House of Lords; the parliament was exclusively of a Protestant character; and yet, at that period, at the instance of the executive government, that parliament—without a division, without a dissentient voice—consented to this supposed violation of principle, voted the sum that was then thought requisite for the maintenance of the institution, and clothed the institution with a parliamentary sanction. I need not repeat, that at this period George III. was the sovereign, and Mr. Pitt was the first minister of the Crown. In 1800, before the Union, another act of the Irish parliament was passed upon the same subject; and on the completion of the Union, the imperial parliament found this college established and supported by parliamentary grants. Those grants were continued by the imperial parliament, and in the year 1808 an act was passed, not interfering with the institution, but adopting and sanctioning it, and giving facilities for its further extension. The present year, 1845, completes the series of fifty years during which this vote has been annually continued by the House—a vote for the support of Maynooth. I know that there is a generally prevailing impression that the imperial parliament has hitherto done nothing more than adopt the acts of the Irish parliament—that they found the vote established, and they have continued it without alteration, feeling themselves bound by the contract into which the Irish parliament had entered. Now, I am about to prove to you that that impression is completely erroneous; that you have at two distinct periods granted additional sums in aid of the vote; that you have not merely contented yourselves with adopting the vote of the Irish parliament, but that you have increased it on two specific occasions, and you are now annually passing the vote, increased by additions made by the British parliament. In the year 1807, I think, the vote was increased to £13,000; the increase being applied for additional buildings. In 1808, Mr. Percival declined to continue the additional sum to its full extent, but at the same time Mr. Percival lent his direct sanction to a permanent increase of the vote. In the year 1808, Mr. Foster was Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer; and I find the following account of what passed in that year on the subject of the grant to Maynooth:—"Mr. Foster rose to move the resolution for a grant to Maynooth College. The grant in former years, he said, had been £8000. Last year it had been increased to £13,000, for the purpose of enabling that institution to erect buildings capable of containing fifty additional students. It was his intention to move, in addition to the £8000 of former years, by which 200 students had been maintained, an additional sum for the main-

tenance of the fifty new students; he therefore moved, that a sum not exceeding £9250 Irish currency, be granted to his Majesty, to defray the expenses of the Roman Catholic seminary in Ireland for the current year."

I turn then to the speech of Mr. Percival: "The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Percival) said, it was particularly desirable, after the establishment of the connexion of this country with the Irish Catholics since the Union, that the grant of the Irish parliament should not be diminished. The fact was, that by the vote then under consideration, that grant was to be extended to a provision for one-fourth more than were educated heretofore. It appeared, besides, that 111 others were educated for the Catholic priesthood in different parts of Ireland." . . . "On the whole, he thought that the supply of 361 would be sufficient to meet the demand of the Catholic clergy, and therefore should vote for the proposition of his right hon. friend."

Here is a proof that, in 1808, Mr. Percival being the minister, the British government consented to an extension of the vote beyond that which had been made by the Irish parliament, for the express purpose of providing education for fifty additional students; and Mr. Percival, in acceding to the grant, implied that if he had thought a greater number of students than 361 was required for the service of the Roman Catholic church, he would not have been unwilling still further to augment the sum for that purpose. Again, in 1813, there was an addition to the vote; I can speak to it with certainty, because at the time I filled the office of Chief Secretary to the Lord-lieutenant. This addition was of £700 a-year, to be applied to the better maintenance of the senior students, called the Dunboync students. I have stated now to the House the circumstances under which this connexion has grown up. I have shown how it originated in 1795, and has been continued ever since, the vote being increased and the connexion strengthened by the acts of the imperial parliament. I ask you, whether you are now prepared to declare to the Roman Catholic body—"During this half century we have been in error, we have been violating a conscientious scruple which we must now observe, and we give notice to the Roman Catholics of Ireland that this connexion, after continuing for half a century, must now be abolished." Recollect that when it was formed the Roman Catholics were labouring under disabilities that excluded them from office and from parliament; and that those disabilities did not constitute, in the view of the Irish parliament, an objection to originating this grant. Those disabilities have been now entirely removed; the Irish Roman Catholics stand upon the same footing with ourselves in respect to civil privileges: shall we now turn to them and tell them, in a harsh and unfriendly tone—"We cannot act towards you in the spirit in which the parliament of your own country acted? True, you were then labouring under exclusion which has now been removed,—true, you did not then stand on the footing of equal privilege,—true, the parliament which favoured you was an Irish parliament—was a parliament exclusively Protestant; the scruples of conscience that parliament did not feel, we feel; and the connexion with your religious education which, in the hour of peril, they established, we must repudiate and dissolve." Sir, I should deprecate such a step. It is not the amount of the pecuniary grant; what I deprecate is the animus it would indicate. We should never be able to convince those from whom the grant was withheld, that those scruples which were not felt by George III., by Mr. Pitt, by the exclusively Protestant legislature of their own country, are now felt to such a degree by us, that we must abandon the connexion which was thus formed. Sir, I should deeply regret, not merely on account of the Roman Catholics, but on account of the general interests of the community, if we did feel ourselves under the obligation of making the declaration that we, who dissent from the doctrines of the Romish church—that we, who hold a faith which we consider more pure, and to which we are devoted—that we, on account of our devotion to that faith, are prevented from advancing any assistance for the propagation of doctrines from which we dissent. If we make that declaration, what a lesson shall we inculcate upon the landlords of Ireland! Take the case of a Protestant landlord, perhaps an absentee, who has an estate from which he derives a large income; that estate is cultivated by Roman Catholic labourers, and occupied by Roman Catholic tenants. Must I tell him, on the authority of parliament, that he will violate his duty towards his God, if, seeing dependents professing

a faith from which he dissents, in need of religious instruction—in need of religious consolation—in want of the means of joining in the public worship of their Creator—he should assign some portion of the wealth derived from this estate to provide that instruction and that consolation in the only mode in which they can be available? Surely it would be forgiven to that landlord; surely he would not be acting in a spirit opposed to the precepts of his own faith, if he were to say to these humble dependents—“I differ from you in religious doctrines, but still my wish is, that in the hour of need you should receive spiritual instruction and consolation from the hands of those from whom alone you can derive them. I will give you a piece of ground for a chapel; I will contribute towards its construction; nay, more, I will contribute something towards the maintenance of that minister who is to inculcate doctrines which you believe, but which I cannot agree to.” Take the example of the city companies; they act in the most liberal manner towards the communities who live on their estates. They have done every thing they could to promote the religious instruction of their Protestant tenantry—but they have not felt themselves precluded by conscientious scruples from allowing a small sum as a stipend for the Roman Catholic priest, and have contributed towards the expenses of repairing the chapel. Am I to advise parliament to tell those companies—“You cannot continue that aid to a religious profession from which you dissent without violating your own religious principles.” So far for the case of the individual proprietors, and of the great city companies. But what will be our own situation? The consequences of that declaration are far more extensive than at first they may appear. How shall we act when we come to vote for the Presbyterian ministers in Ireland? Shall we continue the vote? A portion of it is distinctly allotted to the support of men of religious principles which we totally repudiate. Again, what position shall we stand in with regard to our colonies, if we avow that an act of this kind is improper and irreligious? In what relation do we stand to the Roman Catholics of Malta, Gibraltar, Canada, the Mauritius, and various other of the possessions of the Crown? In all these cases we have found it impossible to act on that principle of disclaiming altogether connexion with, and support of those from whose religious opinions we dissent. Nay, more, how shall we stand with regard to the Roman Catholics in Ireland? Shall we repeal the act which provides Roman Catholic chaplains for prisons? By a recent enactment you have enabled the grand jury to appoint a Roman Catholic chaplain. You have compelled the grand jury to make the appointment upon requisition from the judge. You have required the grand jury to make provision for the services of that chaplain from the public purse; and you have prevented the assignment of unequal salaries to ministers of different religions, making them equal to the ministers of the Church of England, the Presbyterian, and the Roman Catholic. Again, will you repeal the act which provides chaplains for workhouses? There again you have imposed the obligation of appointing Roman Catholic chaplains. You waived, in this case of a prison and a convict, the strict maintenance of the principle which is contended for. A noble and better feeling interposed, and relaxed the rigour of principle. You felt that there ought to be provided for dying men in their last moments, guilty beings about to suffer for their crimes, about to be ushered into the presence of their Creator, religious consolation from the only spiritual guide from whom they could receive it. You have taken the same course with respect to the wretched inmates of a workhouse, and you have distinctly provided that that faith which is not your faith, and those doctrines which are not your doctrines, shall be inculcated by Roman Catholic chaplains, for whom you have provided a salary. Can I then, after reviewing our course as to the Colonies, and as to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, seeing what has passed for the last fifty years, can I come to the conclusion to which some are prepared to come, that we are to refuse this grant upon the ground that it would be a violation of principle to agree to it? If that conclusion be not justifiable, I have disposed of two of the courses which it is competent for us to pursue—the entire repudiation of any grant to Maynooth, or the continuance of the present grant, and the present law, unaltered. There remains but one other course, and that is the course which we are prepared to take. We are prepared, in a liberal and a confiding spirit to improve the institution, and to elevate the character of the education which it supplies. By improvement I do not mean such an interference with the course of education as would poison all the

good that you might derive from liberality. I mean that we should treat that institution in a generous spirit; in the hope that we shall be met in a corresponding spirit, and that we shall be repaid for our liberality by infusing a better feeling into the institution, and by ensuring a more liberal system of instruction. We shall propose such an increase to the grant as shall provide a sufficient supply of well-educated ministers of the Roman Catholic church. A mere addition of some £3,000 or £4,000 would really be worse than nothing. I exclude the idea of a small increase like that from my consideration altogether. If the religious objection to a grant is overcome, I cannot think that an objection on mere pecuniary grounds will be allowed to prevail. I will now, with the permission of the House, proceed to state the nature of the proposal which, on the part of the government, I am instructed to make. I have said, that by the existing law the trustees of Maynooth are expressly empowered to purchase and acquire land. The original act gave them power to purchase to the extent of £1,000 per annum. That power was increased by the 48th of George III., which act enabled them to hold lands to the extent of £1,000, in addition to the land already possessed. That was the enactment; but the intended effect of it has never been realized, because the trustees not being incorporated—although authorized to acquire land—can take no effectual grant of any to them and their successors. They cannot receive land on any other terms than for the lives of individual trustees. We propose to remedy that defect. We propose to incorporate the trustees, and to make them a body politic, by the name of the "trustees of Maynooth College." Thus we shall give them that power to hold land which it must have been intended to give them from the first; and we shall permit them to hold real property to the extent of £3,000 per annum. If the members of the Roman Catholic faith are desirous—as I think they will be after you have improved the constitution of this college—to make provision for particular localities, or to contribute to the general expenses of the institution, I can see no objection to such voluntary contributions. We propose, therefore, to permit the trustees so incorporated, to hold real property to the extent of £3,000 per annum; and, of course, to legalize the conveyance of real property to the trustees by individuals to that extent. I next address myself to the provision to be made for the chief officers of the college. We propose that there should be a more liberal salary as compared with the present stipend of the president and professors. As I before said, the stipend of each individual professor does not now exceed £122 per annum. Instead of defining exactly what shall be the amount paid to each professor, we propose to allot to the trustees of Maynooth a certain sum, which shall be placed at their discretion, for the payment of the charges of the establishment in respect to officers and professors. That sum will admit of a payment of £600 or £700 per annum to the president of the college; of £260 or £270 to the professors of theology; and of £220 or £230 to the other professors. We propose, therefore, that a sum not exceeding £6,000 shall be allotted to the trustees for making provision for the officers of the institution. With regard to the students, I would remind the House that the college, generally speaking, is divided into two departments. The senior department consists of three senior classes of divinity students; and includes the persons from whom a selection is made for the Roman Catholic priesthood. In the subordinate division of the college there are four classes. In addition to those two departments are twenty senior students, who have passed through the college course with peculiar credit, called the Dunboyne students—a Lord Dunboyne having bequeathed £500 a year towards their support. They are selected by the president on the score of merit and good conduct; and allowed to remain three years after the completion of the ordinary college course. To each one is at present allowed £55 a year; of which sum £25 goes to the college for the student's support. There are at present about 440 students in the college—divided into these three classes—the Dunboyne students, the three senior classes, and the four junior classes. We propose to allot to each of the Dunboyne students, in number twenty, the sum of £40 per annum. We propose to make provision on the whole for 500 free students—250 students in the four junior classes, and 250 in the three senior or divinity classes. We propose that for the maintenance of each student, to cover the expense of his commons, attendance, and other charges consequent upon academical education, a sum shall be placed at the disposal of the trustees, calculated on an average of £28 per annum

for each student. We propose that to each of the students in the three senior classes the sum of £20 per annum for their own personal expenses shall be allowed in addition. This will require a very considerable sum. For the salaries of the professors, for the provision of a library, and for other expenses of that nature, a sum not exceeding £6,000 will be requisite. For the twenty Dunboyne students the sum of £800. The allowance for the maintenance of 500 students in the two departments, and of the twenty Dunboyne students, at £28 each, will amount to £14,560. The allowance of £20 each to the divinity students in the three senior classes will make £5,000. Thus we have a total for the annual charge on account of the establishment of £26,360. That will not be in addition to the present vote, but including it. In proposing that such additional grant shall be made, it will be observed that the number of the students in the college is actually increased from 440 to 500; and it is intended that the building shall be so altered and improved as that one decent room shall be assigned to each student. We propose that the college shall be made in appearance, and in reality, more worthy, at least, than it is at present, of the purpose to which it is applied. We propose that proper provision shall be made for the accommodation of the president and professors, the repair of the hall and chapel, and of the building generally. To effect this object, a grant, not, of course, an annual one, to the extent of £30,000 will be requisite. We intend that a sum of money, so sanctioned by parliament, shall be applied for the purposes I have described. We propose, at the same time, that the number of students supported by the public grant, shall not exceed 500; that there shall be no power of increasing the number to 600 or 700, by reducing the individual allowances. We wish to put the establishment on a liberal footing; so that the reminiscences of Maynooth may no longer be revolting. It is therefore that we propose to limit the number of students to 500. We propose also that the board of works shall undertake the repairs of the college, as they do of the other public buildings; in order that the charge for them may be conducted with the greatest economy. We do not propose to make provision in the act for the annual expenses of the repairs; but that they shall be the subject of an annual vote, and be included in the annual estimates for the board of works, as in other cases. With respect to the visitorial power of the college, it is exercised, at present, for the ordinary purposes of education, by certain persons holding judicial offices, and by parties who either were originally appointed by the act of 1795, or have been since elected to fill up vacancies as they have occurred since that time. Now, our opinion is, that *ex officio* visitors are of little value. We propose that the lord chancellor and the judges should be relieved from this duty; and that her Majesty shall have the power to appoint five visitors, in addition to the elected visitors. But we do not propose that those visitors so appointed shall exercise any powers of visitation other than the present visitors do. We propose, however, that there shall be *bonâ fide* visitations; and that they shall take place, as a matter of course, annually, instead of triennially, as is now the case. We propose, also, that the lord-lieutenant should have the power of directing a visitation whenever he may think proper. These visitorial powers are not to extend to any matter relating to the doctrine or discipline of the Church of Rome. We will not spoil this act by any attempt at novel and ungracious interference with such matters. It would be utterly ineffective for any good purpose. The visitorial power in all matters connected with the doctrine or discipline of the Roman Catholic Church is now exercised, and can only be exercised, by three visitors specially selected for this purpose by the Trustees; which visitors must be members of the Roman Catholic Church. These special visitors are, I believe, at present, Archbishop Crolly, Archbishop Murray, and the Earl of Fingal. We leave the law as we find it in respect to the authority and functions of these special visitors. I believe that I have now stated the general outline of the measure which her Majesty's government have felt it their duty to bring under the consideration of the House. It is, I trust, conceived in the spirit to which I have referred—a liberal and confiding spirit. We have not introduced it without communication with the leading ecclesiastical authorities in the Roman Catholic Church. It has not been a subject of stipulation or contract with them. We have intimated to them our intention; and we have every reason to believe that they are satisfied with and grateful for the measure; that they will strongly recommend its acceptance; and

that the great body of the intelligence and respectability of the Roman Catholic community will accept the measure as a liberal and efficient maintenance for the establishment at Maynooth. I commit this proposal of the government to the deliberate consideration of this House; we are not insensible of the difficulties which we shall have to encounter; but, at the same time, after mature consideration, we are firmly convinced that this measure which I now propose, is nothing more than a liberal construction of those obligations which, in point of honour and good faith, are imposed on the legislature of this kingdom. We introduce no new principle. That which we propose is the widening of the foundation of Maynooth in proportion to the increased demands for the services of the Roman Catholic priesthood; the providing of ministers for the performance of those services better instructed, and inspired with more kindly and friendly feelings towards the State. We feel that we can propose this, and can ask your assent to this without any violation of conscientious scruples. We believe that it is perfectly compatible to hold steadfast the profession of our own faith without wavering, and, at the same time, to improve the education and to elevate the character of those who—do what you will—pass this measure or refuse it—will continue to be the spiritual guides and religious instructors of millions of your fellow-countrymen. The right hon. baronet concluded by moving,—“That the chairman be directed to move the House, that leave be given to bring in a bill to amend the acts relating to the College of Maynooth.”

A long discussion ensued, and the result of the division was: Ayes, 216; Noes; 114; majority, 102.

The bill was brought in and read a first time, and the House adjourned.

APRIL 11, 1845.

Sir Robert Peel moved the second reading of the Maynooth College Bill.

Mr. Colquhoun moved as an amendment, that the bill be read a second time that day six months. A long discussion ensued, extending over six nights, at the close of which—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows: Sir, I am not about to review the course of this debate. It has been protracted to a period unusually long; but I think it has not been protracted unnaturally or unreasonably, considering the importance of the subject, and the excitement of the public feeling with respect to it. Sir, the course of that debate has exhibited many honourable examples of men, determined at any hazard to express their conscientious feelings upon this question. Many upon this side of the House, who approved generally of the policy and of the conduct of her Majesty's government, yet conscientiously differing from them upon the proposal which they have made on the present occasion, have proved their determination to permit no political or party consideration to interfere with the honest expression of their opinion, whatever may be the consequence of their so doing. Sir, I assure those hon. members that, however deeply I regret the difference that has arisen between us, I honour them for the course they have pursued. Again, on the other side of the House, we have the same honourable exhibitions; and I must say that my observations are intended to apply equally to hon. members on both sides. There have been also examples equally honourable on the other side of the House as well as on this, of men prepared to encounter any risk—to brave any disapprobation on the part of their constituents—to relinquish, perhaps for ever, their political station—because they believed this measure to be politic and just, and they have resolved to act on their own sense of public duty, rather than on the feelings which they know to be entertained by their constituents. I say the debate has been honourable both to the opponents and to the supporters of this measure. Sir, I abstain from any minute reference to the line of argument that has been adduced in this debate. Whatever feelings may have been occasionally excited in my mind in the course of it, they are overpowered by, and are merged in, one feeling of deep and earnest hope that you will not become parties to the rejection of this measure. You may think, and perhaps not unjustly, that it would have been better if this measure should have proceeded from the constant and strenuous friends of the Roman Catholics. You may think it right that those who have proposed such a measure should forfeit your patronage. Act upon that principle—inflct that penalty—withdraw from us your confidence—punish the men, but do not disregard the consequences

of rejecting this measure as it has been introduced. You tell us—my hon. and respected friend who spoke last, the representative of the university of Oxford has told us—that we have forfeited the confidence, not only of a great party in this House, but of a still more powerful party in the country. He says we have destroyed that element of power which constitutes the ability to carry on the public business. I have been told in the course of the night, that if I were to appeal even to my own constituents, limited as is their number, and strong as is supposed to be the personal confidence which they repose in me, and that which I have in them, that I should forfeit my seat in parliament. Well, be it so. Suppose that to be a correct representation of the real state of affairs—do you believe that we would have incurred the hazards—do you think that we should have run the risk of forfeiting the confidence of the great party by whom we have been supported; that we would have run the risk of losing the confidence of the great body of the people out of doors; that we would have endangered our own existence as a government, and our seats as members of parliament? Do you think that we, who have watched the course of affairs in Ireland; we, who have had all the anxieties that accompany the administration of its affairs; do you believe that any thing but a sense of public duty would have induced us to incur all these risks which you tell us we have incurred? Sir, I feel bound to answer the questions put to me as the author of this measure, and, as the organ of the government, to explain—I am afraid I should say, after the length to which I troubled the House on a former evening—to recapitulate the motives of the government in bringing forward this measure—the object intended by it—the ulterior objects which we contemplate—and the effects upon the state of Ireland, and its relations to this country, which we do think the adoption of this measure may produce. Sir, our motives for introducing this measure are these. In 1843, there was a formidable excitement in Ireland; there were immense meetings held there, menacing the public tranquillity. We did determine to resist the object which these meetings, and which that demonstration of physical force had in view, and we were urged by some to demand extraordinary powers, and were taunted by others with inaction. We then thought it unwise hastily and precipitately to interfere. We thought it our duty to have ranged on our side, as we asked for no extraordinary powers—to have ranged on our side, when we did interfere, the force of public opinion. We resisted all the encouragements to precipitate, undue, and hasty action. But when we at length thought the case was clearly established; when we thought that the public peace was endangered; when we thought that the object of these demonstrations were clear and developed, we then did, relying on the justice of our cause, resort to the law of the land, and the result of that resort was the condemnation, in a court of law, of the parties concerned in these demonstrations. A temporary calm ensued. There was a universal feeling at that time that you ought not merely to rely on applications of force, but that then was the time—the law and its authority having been vindicated—it being impossible that our conduct could then be imputed to intimidation—there was a feeling, I say, then prevalent, that it was the duty of the government to take into consideration the condition of Ireland. We were invited to do that by those opposed to us. The noble lord opposite (Lord John Russell), who, I must say, has in this matter acted on the principle on which I expected he would act, having invited us to take that course, and having informed us that there were measures which, consistently with our avowed principles, we might adopt, which he thought would have a beneficial effect—led us, as the organ of a great party, to infer that, if we did adopt them, party considerations should oppose no impediment to an honourable and generous support. We, therefore, determined to take into consideration the social condition of Ireland, in so far as related immediately to the relations of landlord and tenant. We did not yet feel ourselves in a condition to legislate. Local circumstances of the country prevented us. We prevailed upon five honourable men—truly representing the state of parties in Ireland—to undertake the local and personal inquiry, which might remove much misconception, and lay the foundation of legislative measures for the improvement of the social condition of Ireland. Towards the close of the last session of parliament we proposed a measure calculated, as we thought, to remedy a great grievance. We thought the law relating to charitable bequests in that country, a law justly liable to complaint on the part of the Roman Catholics. It placed the charge of such bequests

under the superintendence of a body exclusively Protestant. We determined to alter the constitution of that body which had the charge of charitable bequests; we went further, we expressly enabled the proprietors in Ireland to provide a permanent endowment, by voluntary contribution, for the building of Roman Catholic chapels, and the support of Roman Catholic ministers and churches. That bill passed with the almost universal concurrence of this House. On the second reading there was, I think, a division, and a majority of about 72 to 5; and the five members who voted against it were members of the Roman Catholic persuasion in Ireland; or, if there were one or two professing the Protestant faith, they were members acting immediately in unison with the Roman Catholics in Ireland. The objection to the bill did not come, therefore, from the English members of the House, or from those who were, and still are, interested in the maintenance of the Protestant cause. At that time, whether it was that you had a more lively recollection of the state of Ireland in 1843 I know not; but you did almost unanimously approve of the measure brought in by the government, which expressly permitted, sanctioned, and encouraged the endowment of Roman Catholic bishops and ministers by the advance of money for the building of Roman Catholic chapels. Well, if you then did that, is the religious objection now to be deemed insuperable? You appointed five Roman Catholic commissioners; ten were appointed in all, and five of them were necessarily to be Roman Catholics, with a Roman Catholic secretary. The expense of that commission was defrayed out of the public funds; and we did that in order that we might invite and encourage the voluntary endowments of Roman Catholic churches. We were pressed to bind the discretion of the Crown in respect to the appointment of some of these commissioners. We undertook, on the part of the government, to carry out the bill in the spirit in which it had been adopted. We proposed as these commissioners, prelates of the Roman Catholic church. They felt it their duty to accept the appointment. They acted from public and disinterested motives. They believed that you were honest in your intentions, in doing an act of justice in a kind manner; and the first result of that act was to break up, in some degree, that formidable combination of laity, clergy, and physical strength, which had heretofore existed. Sir, these prelates had great difficulties to encounter, in undertaking to co-operate with us in the execution of that measure. There was a formidable agitation directed against them; but, confiding in the purity of their motives, and in the belief of the honourable intentions of the government, they resisted the force of that agitation, and we had the satisfaction of seeing prelates of the Established Church, and prelates of the Roman Catholic religion, acting in friendly concert for the promotion of a common object. Let me say, that was no small object to attain by the execution of the first act; that act having received the almost unanimous approbation of both Houses of parliament. There was no violation of public principle—no sacrifice of the interests of the Protestant religion, to which, I trust, I as firmly adhere, the doctrines of which I hold in as high estimation, as any of my hon. friends around me; but the result of that measure of justice, offered in the spirit of kindness, was that which I have described. Was not this reason sufficient to induce us to proceed as we have begun? I do not say that it should be looked upon as an encouragement to make any concession inconsistent with religious principle, or inconsistent with any constitutional principle. I say no more than that it was a marked encouragement to proceed in the course of conciliation consistent with the principles of the constitution. We had then to consider what course we should take with respect to Maynooth. It was forced upon us. Neither you nor we can escape the consideration—what will you do with the college of Maynooth? You have supported it for fifty years. My hon. friend says (and he escapes from a great difficulty in the argument by the avowal) that he is prepared to withdraw the grant. Sir, I am not. When opposed to her Majesty's government, I came down here expressly to support them in the maintenance of that college; and I do not, indeed, believe that there can be ten men found in this House who would have thought it justice, after passing the act of last session, having acted in cordial concert with Roman Catholic prelates who consented to be commissioners in the execution of that act—I say, I do not believe there are ten men in this House who would believe it possible for us to come down this year and state, “a conscientious scruple prevents us from continuing the grant to May-



nooth." Why, what would have been the feeling of the whole of the Roman Catholic community? We continued the grant, as I said before, for fifty years. But it is not merely the vote which you have passed—you have also passed three acts of parliament for cementing your connection with that institution. You have appointed trustees—you have subjected their by-laws to the revision of the lord-lieutenant and his approval—you have made the nomination of the president dependent on his approbation. That is the relation in which you stand to Maynooth. You have for fifty years, therefore, been professing to act, as far as you could consistently with our own principles and feelings, in a spirit of kindness to the Roman Catholic community. Can you conceive it possible that I, for example, who in 1840 thought it impossible to withhold the grant, should have this year advised the House of Commons to separate itself from all connection with it? Surely, there can be but few who would take that course. Well, then, should we continue it? Some hon. gentlemen have doubted the accuracy of the statements which have been made with regard to the state of the college of Maynooth. One hon. gentleman has read some account which he had received of the comfortable condition of the students, the appearance of the building, and the general state of the college. Sir, the account which I gave of Maynooth will, I believe, be confirmed by all who know it; that it is an institution, professing to be supported by the government and by parliament, which is in a condition utterly unworthy of the patronage of the state. I hold in my hand what I believe to be a much more correct account than that to which the right hon. gentleman the member for Perth has referred. It was quoted by a noble lord who, perhaps, is better acquainted with the state of Ireland than any other noble lord in the House of Peers—I mean Lord Monteagle—it was quoted, I say, by that noble lord from a book written in the year 1842. The writer says,—“An accurate description of Maynooth would be of necessity so disagreeable, that it is best to pass it over in a few words. There is such a look of lazy squalor about it, that no Englishman who has not seen it can suspect. Lecture-rooms and dining-hall, kitchen and students' rooms, are all the same. Why should the place be so shamefully ruinous?”

Such was the place in which the Roman Catholics were educated, you assigning to them only £9,000 a year. Some of the objections which I have heard to Maynooth only confirm my opinion of the policy of increasing this grant. The hon. member for Dublin says that the Maynooth priests have taken a part in the agitation. Why, can you be surprised at it? Why, by the amount which you have granted, so far from having afforded them the means of liberal and enlightened education, you have compelled them to make their education exclusively theological, and you have compelled them to make that theology exclusively polemical. That has been the consequence of the votes which you have given. You have your three professors of theology; you have these professors living upon some £120 a year, endowed by you, and teaching the doctrines of the Roman Catholic religion. Is it any practical compensation for your sacrifice of principle, that you have endowed them in so niggardly and so parsimonious a manner? I will refer you to a statement that was made before the committee in 1826, although I believe things have somewhat improved since, by one of the professors—the professor of the Greek and Latin languages—a gentleman of the greatest distinction, who had taken almost every prize as a Dunboyne student. He was afterwards, as I have said, professor of Greek and Latin, and he was asked,—“Do you receive anything from the annual vote?”—“I do.” “What is your stipend?”—“It is £80 a year Irish, from which thirty guineas are deducted on account of groceries and other necessaries.”

Do you then mean to continue that state of things, and do we violate any principle in improving it? I will not, I cannot, be a party to this. I will not send out fifty theologians to be parish priests in Ireland educated in this wretched way, and amongst such scenes as I have described. What we propose is to increase the comforts, to elevate the condition of the professors, and to enable them to remain longer at the college. They are men now of great acquirements—they are men, I believe, of highly respectable talents—they devote themselves to this toil at their miserable salaries, from the pure zeal which they entertain for the interests of religion and the cause of education. I beg to ask, do we do any thing inconsistent with the Protestant religion, or injurious to the Protestant faith, if we raise their character, or at

least their position in society, and give them the means of supporting themselves with decency and in comfort? Now, mark what the bearing of this will be on your Endowment act. You have encouraged voluntary endowments on the part of the great landed proprietors in Ireland, and I do hope that the landed proprietors of Ireland will avail themselves of the facilities which have been afforded them under that act. I cannot conceive a better mode of endowment, one more pregnant with advantage to the public interest, or more calculated to assuage the evils to which difference of religious faith gives rise, than by establishing a connection between the Protestant proprietors of Ireland and the Roman Catholic clergy. But if you make the Roman Catholic priest merely a skilful polemic devoted to his religion—this advantage is not so likely to accrue, as if you give him the means of acquiring scientific and scholastic knowledge. If you make him a good chemist, in short, a proficient in modern science, then, probably, the landed proprietor will feel an inducement to avail himself of his power, and by voluntary contribution to make an endowment for him. The increase of this vote to Maynooth, therefore, has a material bearing upon, and greatly facilitates the operation of, the Charitable Bequests act. We are told that this institution of Maynooth is of a monastic and ascetic character. Whose fault is that? Not that of the Roman Catholics. In 1795, at the institution of the College, Mr. Grattan presented a petition from the Roman Catholic body against that clause in the act which prohibited the education of Protestants at Maynooth. The trustees of Maynooth were desirous of establishing a lay college. They did not wish it to be of an exclusive character. They, however, were interfered with and prevented; and Mr. Abbott informed the secretary, that the creation of a lay college would be contrary to the intentions of the act; and, in consequence of the intervention of the British government, it was prevented. Therefore, the Roman Catholics themselves are not responsible for the peculiar character of the education. At the same time, my belief is, that any attempt now to make it a condition that the education to be given them should be that of a mixed or secular character, would be totally fruitless. It would alter the character of your liberality, and prevent its acceptance. It was Mr. Burke who inculcated on the British government the necessity of providing spiritual education for those who had to discharge the functions of Roman Catholic priests. Well, Sir, we determined then that it was desirable to increase this grant; and, in determining to increase it, to make the offer in a manner which should be thoroughly acceptable to the Roman Catholic people. We considered well the question; we did not act lightly in this matter. We considered the question—shall we before we propose this increase institute an inquiry into the course of instruction at Maynooth? We referred to the inquiry which was made in the year 1826, and I own that we came to the conclusion that no benefit would result from a new commission of inquiry sent to examine Maynooth. Was that inquiry to be conducted in a friendly or a hostile spirit? No commission which you could appoint would be satisfactory, unless it contained the names of men hostile to the course of education there. We foresaw, therefore, that the consequences of the appointment of such a commission would only be to generate a hostile theological controversy; and after mature consideration, we came to the conclusion that it was better to adopt Maynooth as we found it. We did not expect any new light to be thrown on the state of Maynooth beyond that which the commission of 1826 affords; and we determined to trust for the beneficial effect of our interference to the liberality and confidence of parliament. We propose that the vote should be a permanent one, instead of an annual one. We do not think that, by making the vote for Maynooth permanent, you interfere with any existing principle, and we do think that to remove it from annual controversy in the House of Commons, will conduce to peace, and relieve us from painful debates. We have incorporated the trustees, because we have thought that, in so acting, we do that which is conformable to the spirit of the original act which was passed on this subject. When you appointed trustees, you so appointed them to enable them to require land; but, in refusing to incorporate them, you disable them from possessing land without being put to great and constant expense in the law courts. In incorporating them, you relieve them from litigation; but the principle was admitted when the trustees were appointed, that they might be prepared to acquire land; and we propose to incorporate them, and

give them the power of holding land, without the necessity of constant litigation. That is the whole of our proposal. I see in that proposal, though the vote be not annual, but that the measure is to be permanent—I see, I say, no violation of principle which does not apply to a continuance of this vote for another fifty years in the way in which it has been formerly granted. In each case, the money will be distinctly applied, under the authority of parliament, in the inculcation of the tenets of the Roman Catholic belief. It is said, that the Roman Catholic people of Ireland are indifferent to this proposition. We are asked what impression do we anticipate to make on the professors of Maynooth by it? We are told that they will reject it as an unnecessary boon; and that they will laugh at us for our liberality. In this respect you do injustice to their feelings. The generosity with which you have acted, has excited gratitude in them. When they heard of the proposition, they wrote immediately a letter, of which I will read a part to the House. I think there are seventeen professors at Maynooth; and the letter addressed to me is signed by sixteen out of the seventeen, the other one being incapacitated by illness. In that letter they thus express themselves:—"The undersigned beg leave most respectfully to express our deep sense of gratitude for the very liberal provision which you, as the head of the government, have proposed for the education of the Roman Catholic clergy, and still more for the kind and gracious manner in which you have recommended the measure to the friendly consideration of the House."

If you ask me whether I prefer that the education of the Catholic clergy should be entrusted to men influenced by such grateful feelings, rather than to men whom you have starved by the paltry and shameful pittance you have hitherto given them, I do not hesitate to say, if I am to entrust the education of men who have to inculcate peace and good order—if I have to provide for what I believe to be the general interests—nay, what I believe to be the interests of the Protestant religion—then I would rather commit the instruction of the young men who are to be the spiritual guides of the people in another faith, who are to be their instructors through life, to persons grateful for your liberality, than to men who view with indignation the paltry pittance you assign to them, under a pretence of making a provision for their education. I do not pretend to say that they will be satisfied with institutions as they exist at present. I do not pretend to say that this will produce permanent satisfaction—I do not say that it will induce these men to compromise a single principle. I cannot go so far as that. I do not guarantee the vote for Maynooth as a final and complete measure. I cannot say that; but I can give you a proof that they are not indifferent to your liberality; and that, under the generous impulse of their feelings, they declare that this is an honourable and liberal proceeding. This is all I profess—these are the motives on which we acted when we made this proposal. My hon. friend asks me two questions. He asks me this. He calls upon me to state whether or not this is part of a preconceived system, the whole of which we have not developed; and whether the proposal with respect to Maynooth is not brought forward designedly for the purpose of facilitating the endowment of the Roman Catholic clergy? I answer my hon. friend, that this proposal is brought forward singly and exclusively on its own abstract merits. It is a proposal by itself, and not a part of a preconceived system; it is not brought forward with the design of facilitating the endowment of the Roman Catholic clergy. We have had no communication on this subject with any authority in Ireland, or elsewhere. We have not had that subject in our contemplation. You may suppose—as I have seen rumours of it elsewhere—that though we have had no communication with the Roman Catholic authorities in Ireland, yet that we have had some secret negotiations with Rome. I state explicitly that the report is altogether without foundation. I have a strong impression that we should do no good in Ireland by any secret, unavowed negotiations at Rome, to which the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland is not a party. By such a negotiation, fettering the independence of the church—I mean the Roman Catholic Church—or establishing any connection between the state and that church as it exists in Ireland, of which members of the church were not cognizant, and to which they were not parties, I do not think any such arrangement could be satisfactory to them, or beneficial to the country. I have said that this measure forms no part of a general system; that it is not brought for-

ward designedly for the purpose of forming the foundation of a future proposal for an endowment. I say also, as to endowment, that I think there are very great objections to it. I do not believe that it would be acceptable to the Roman Catholic laity; nor have the Roman Catholic clergy exhibited any inclination in its favour. Perhaps the declaration recently made by the hon. member for Kildare with respect to endowment, may be in your recollection. He distinctly declared that the clergy and laity were opposed to the endowment of the Roman Catholic Church; and it is impossible not to see, from the many demonstrations of feeling in this country, that here also there would be great difficulties with respect to such a measure. I have stated precisely the truth with respect to endowments. But my hon. friend proceeds to ask, "Will you make a declaration that it would not be consistent with your principles, that at any future time there should be an endowment of Roman Catholic ministers?" I must say I think my hon. friend has no right to require such a declaration. I have stated to you most explicitly the truth, but I will make no such declaration. This I will not do; and I beg you to draw no unfair inference from it—I will not hamper or embarrass any future government by a declaration upon that which is now a difficulty that I know to be altogether insuperable. I see great difficulties in the way of such a measure; but I do not think any one has a right to call upon me now to give a public opinion that those difficulties can never, at any future time, be overcome. I think it would not be right in me, for the purpose of purchasing a relaxation in the opposition to the measures which I now propose, to place on record a declaration which may fetter the action of those who may hereafter be responsible for the government of the country. My hon. friend asks me whether I do not consider there is some principle of religious objection opposed to endowment? In refusing to state the objection as one at all times insuperable, I cannot say there is a decided religious objection to it. I think that this measure has no bearing on the religious question, and, so far as religion is concerned, does not affect the question of Endowment. I believe that the Endowment act of last session, by which you constituted a board for facilitating the endowment of Roman Catholic bishops and ministers, and for building Roman Catholic chapels, had a much more material bearing upon the religious principle than the present bill for a permanent grant to Maynooth. I am bound to say, with all respect for my hon. friend, that I cannot concur in his doctrine, that it is an offence in the eyes of God to support the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church, and that that same religious principle which compels me to dissent from, excludes me also from contributing to the support, under all circumstances and in all times, of any body of men who adopt the tenets of the Church of Rome. I do not see how my hon. friend can get over the difficulty with regard to our colonies. He says of Malta, that, having taken that colony, and having a capitulation, you are bound by the terms of that capitulation to support the Roman Catholic religion there. But why did you take Malta? Because it was a convenient position in the Mediterranean; and, being so convenient for your purposes, you are now ready to go to war rather than abandon it. But if, as my hon. friend says, there is some high religious principle which prohibits you from connecting yourselves in any way with the Roman Catholic religion, why did you go to war and incur great loss of life in conquering Canada? and why did you accept Malta with this condition? You do not overcome the difficulty by saying that this is a colony, and we are bound by the terms of the capitulation. If the religious principle be good for any thing, it should have prevented you from accepting the colony, and entering into that capitulation. Then as to the other point, I think, too, the doctrine of my hon. friend is dangerous with reference to the interests of the Established Church. The principle of that doctrine is, that it is a violation of conscience to contribute to the support of a religion from the faith of which we dissent. I can understand saying to the Dissenters, "The Established religion is a great national institution—all Christians are interested in its maintenance; we ask you to contribute to its support—in doing so you violate no conscientious scruple, and it will aid the cause of religion generally by keeping up such an establishment as the Church of England." But if I say to the dissenter, "There is no tax I can impose upon you for the maintenance of the Established Church, which does not violate your conscientious scruples," then I make him who

might have been willing to contribute to its support, if he thought that in doing so there was no violation of religious principle, object to a pecuniary impost for such a purpose, because by my own confession I accompany the levy of the tax with an avowed expressed injury to his religious feelings. My hon. friend says—"The Established Church is supported by tithes; tithes are a charge upon property; the dissenter, therefore, who acquires or inherits property takes it with its encumbrances; and contributions to the church being one of those incumbrances, it is no violation of conscience on his part to discharge a legal obligation." The hon. gentleman says the same of church-rates; but what does my hon. friend say of church extension? Tithes may be a legal incumbrance upon property; church-rates may partake of the same character; but supposing this House, for the interests of religion, were to think it advisable this year and next year to do what they have done in former years—make a grant for the construction of religious edifices in connection with the Church of England, would it not be better that we should be enabled to say to the dissenter, "We call upon you to contribute to this object, meaning to impose no violation upon your conscience?" than that we should say, "We make you contribute to the support of a church from whose doctrines you dissent, and we tell you it is a violation of your religious scruples if you consent." It is no answer to say to them, "I am a member of the Established Church, and you are dissenters." We must admit that, in respect of conscientious scruples, there is no difference between us. If it violates my conscience to contribute towards the support of the Protestant dissenters in Ulster, it equally violates the conscience of those Protestant dissenters to contribute to the support of the Established Church. I will take it on another ground. I would say to the dissenters that there are great public interests involved in the maintenance of the Established Church; I say the maintenance of that church is important to all religious sects; I call upon them to contribute to this, as I call upon the Quaker to contribute to the support of the army, and I intend to impose no obligation onerous to any man's conscience. But I do shrink from telling the dissenter, "I not only subject you to the tax, but I tell you that by paying it you violate your conscience." On that ground, I cannot agree to the doctrine that this measure is prejudicial to the best interests of the Established Church. So far as to the objects of the government. With regard to the Established Church in Ireland, the opinions I have declared I still adhere to; but I do think, looking at the condition of Ireland, looking at the importance of the question, and taking into account the position of the people, and all its past evils, I do believe this measure, proposed by us for the permanent endowment of Maynooth, is a measure just to the Roman Catholics, while it violates no principle of ours. We hope for the acquiescence of the House in this vote as proposed by the government; the willing adoption of which, we feel confident, will produce a kindly feeling in Ireland. It has produced that effect; it has been received with a grateful feeling, and with a spirit corresponding to that in which it was proposed. I hardly expected it would have produced such an effect as has already attended it. I do not believe the gratitude which is expressed by the Irish people for this measure is connected with any feeling or wish for future encroachments on the interests of the Established Church. I believe that it is the natural effect of a kind and generous policy, producing grateful and kind feelings. I might have been tempted, at an earlier period in the debate, to refer to the speech of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Macaulay); but the taunts and imputations in which he indulged against the government I will forbear from noticing. I will rather follow the example of the noble lord, and abstain altogether from any thing like recrimination. I think, however, if I were so inclined, I could prove, from the admissions of the right hon. gentleman himself, in that part of his speech which was addressed to his constituents, as to there being no violation of principle in this measure, as to its being a mere question between £9000 and £27,000 a year, and as to his not conceiving it possible that any mind could be so obtuse as not to see, that there could be no difference in principle between £9000 and £27,000 a year, that he is the last man who should throw an imputation on the government for departing from past principles. With me every feeling as to the imputation of inconsistency, every feeling with regard to the suspicions thrown upon the sincerity of the government, every other feeling is subordinate to one—my desire that you should not reject this measure. I do not regret the course I have

taken. I know not what the consequences may be in respect to the more kindly relations between Ireland and this country. It has produced in the minds of a generous people a kindly and a grateful feeling. As I said before, punish us; visit us with censure; let the two parties combine against us on the ground that the policy we are adopting ought to be carried out by its original promoters; take what other course you please; but let not your indignation fall on the measure—let it be confined to those who proposed it. I don't rest the measure on any question of mere compact. I say an honourable engagement does exist, which makes it impossible for you to withdraw the support from Maynooth without wounding the feelings of the Roman Catholics of Ireland. It is not the amount of the grant; but, after granting it for fifty years, it could not be withdrawn without exciting suspicion as to your motives. But I say again, I do not defend the measure on the ground of compact; I defend it because I believe it to be a wise and a just measure, and far better than the continuance of the present system. I say that without the least hesitation; and I call on you to recollect that you are responsible for the peace of Ireland. I say, you must break up, in some way or other, that formidable confederacy which exists in that country against the British government and the British connection. I do not believe you can break it up by force. You can do much, consistently with the principles you avow, as to the maintenance of the union and the Protestant church. You can do much to break it up by acting in a spirit of kindness, forbearance, and generosity. And I believe it is essential you should break it up, in order that you may carry on the work of good government in Ireland, and in that you may strengthen the connection between the two countries, and maintain unimpaired the power and dignity of the United Kingdom. When I proposed this measure on Thursday week, I did so, having given notice of it during the last session of parliament, and without reference to events that have since taken place. But on the day after I gave notice of this measure, and introduced it to the consideration of the House, our attention was called to a matter of great importance, and the noble lord (the member for the city of London) did feel it to be his duty partially to raise the veil which conceals the distant future. On the far horizon of the West there rises a cloud—a cloud small indeed, but threatening future storms. It became my duty on the part of government on that occasion, temperately but distinctly to state, that while we are most anxious for an adjustment of the impending differences—while we will leave nothing undone to effect an amicable settlement; yet I did feel it to be part of my duty—of the duty of the first minister of the Crown—to state that, if our rights be invaded, we were determined and prepared to maintain them. I own, Sir, that when I was called upon to make that declaration, I did recollect with satisfaction and consolation that the day before I had sent a message of peace to Ireland. The hon. gentleman the member for Canterbury, who spoke last night, thought it not impossible that the time would come when this country would be compelled to summons all her energies for action. Sir, I heard that speech of the right hon. gentleman with great satisfaction, from the ability and eloquence which it displayed. I heard also the speech, differing as I do from many of its positions of the noble lord (Lord John Manners), who also on the same evening addressed the House, with great satisfaction—I differing from him with respect to his views upon the revolution, and also with respect to that illustrious person whom he called a Dutch stadtholder. It was still impossible for me to listen to his speech, as well as to that of the hon. gentleman, without very great satisfaction at the bright views they indicate of great future eminence. I remember having foretold to the hon. gentleman—I know not whether he recollects it—when, through the embarrassments of youth, others thought that he had failed—I remember I tried to console him; and I told him my conviction was, that he was destined for future eminence. Sir, in his speech last night, that hon. gentleman said that he thought it probable that, in case it should be necessary to summon the energies of this country in defence of her honour and her interests, that to my hand would the high task be confided. Now may God avert so great an evil as war! May God forbid that this time of general peace should be so awfully disturbed! But if it is to be so, if war is to come, I doubt much, considering what is now before me, whether the vindication of our honour and our interests will not be confided to other hands. But to whomsoever they be committed, I shall take my place beside them, encouraging them by every support which

I can give in a just and honourable cause. And if that calamity should befall us, it is my earnest hope that when it shall occur, it may find the people of this empire united in loyalty to the throne, and in determination to support the common interests. It is my earnest prayer, that every pulse throughout this mighty frame shall beat in harmonious action—that Ireland shall stand ranked with us; and then, Sir, confiding in a good cause—confiding in the valour, and perseverance, and fortitude of every part of this great empire—I shall await the result with perfect composure, being assured that the energies of an united people will insure a glorious triumph to a just cause.

The House divided on the question that the word now stand part of the question :—Ayes, 323; Noes, 176: Majority, 147. Bill read a second time.

APRIL 23, 1846.

The order of the day was read for going into committee upon the appropriation to be made from the consolidated fund for the College of Maynooth.

On the question that the speaker do leave the chair, Mr. Ward moved as an amendment, "That it is the opinion of this House that any provision to be made for the purposes of the present bill, ought to be taken from the funds already applicable to ecclesiastical purposes in Ireland."

SIR ROBERT PEEL: I am very unwilling that the House should separate to-night without my protest against the gross misapprehension and misconstruction of what fell from me on a former night. When I addressed hon. members on that occasion, I altogether abstained from party crimination. Having brought forward this measure on the part of her Majesty's government, and seeing the manner in which it was received in Ireland, the satisfaction with which it was hailed, I certainly did and do deprecate, with the utmost anxiety, the failure of the proposal. I know perfectly well that it depended upon hon. gentlemen opposite whether that proposal should or should not be successful; and I think I did, I am sure I ought to have done, and meant to do, ample justice to the motives by which they were influenced. I know perfectly well that it is impossible that many of them could give their support to a measure brought forward by their opponents, without encountering the risk of displeasing their constituents. I think I said on that occasion, that there were on that side of the House most honourable examples of men actuated purely by disinterested and public-spirited motives, who, without reference to the quarter from which this measure proceeded, were prepared to forfeit now and for ever their seats, rather than contribute to its defeat. I think I made that statement. I do not attempt to arrogate to this government the credit of this measure. I said, I recollect perfectly well, that it might perhaps be much better that this measure should have proceeded from those who have been the constant and uniform friends of the Roman Catholics. I am prepared for the consequences of the displeasure which has been manifested on this side of the House, on account of having proposed it. Let that displeasure be visited upon the ministers; but considering the measure which had been proposed, looking at the feeling with which it had been received, I said, do not permit your displeasure to fall on the measure itself. And, sir, it would be base indeed if we were to attempt, after the support with which this measure has been received, to expose those who have supported it to any indignation of Protestant feeling on account of that support. And I must repudiate, on the part of my right hon. friend (Sir James Graham), in the strongest manner, the slightest intention to question the motives of hon. gentlemen opposite, or subject them to any disapprobation from others on account of the support they have given to us on the present occasion. I certainly was surprised at the tone of the hon. and learned member for Bath, and the manner in which he commented on the speech of my right hon. friend. The bill received the support of the hon. member on the second reading—he was then perfectly aware of the nature of the measure. I explained fully that it was intended to provide for the increased grant to Maynooth out of the public revenue when I brought the measure forward. I never led him to suppose it was possible that we should consent to the revenue of the Established Church being interfered with. It was distinctly stated by me, that the funds necessary for the improvement of Maynooth were to be taken from the consolidated fund. I never encouraged the impression, that during any stage of these proceedings we should consent to the appropriation of the funds

of the Established Church. Therefore, the hon. and learned gentleman, on the second reading, was as well aware of the principle and details of the proposal as he is at the present moment. Influenced by those motives, for which I gave him entire credit, knowing from the feelings which prevailed in the city which he represents, that he was incurring the risk which others were ready to incur—yet still, when he supported this bill on the second reading, he must allow me to say that he was perfectly aware of the nature of the proposal, and could not have supposed that we should consent to any appropriation of ecclesiastical revenues. The hon. and learned gentleman says, that I stated that this measure had been brought in in deference to the opinion, or in consequence of the agitation of Mr. O'Connell. I stated directly the reverse. I stated that during the prevalence of agitation we met it and combated it by law; that we succeeded, in Ireland at least, in our appeal to the law, in consequence of which there was a suppression of agitation, at least so far as the suspension of those immense meetings which disturbed the public peace was concerned. After the manifestations of our determination to vindicate the law, was the past experience of those meetings to prevent us from considering whether any other measures could be adopted which were likely to prevent further agitation than physical force? When last year, as I stated the other night, we proposed the measure for providing for the better superintendence of charitable endowments, it received the general support of this House. Were we, when we brought in that measure, influenced by intimidation?—were we not encouraged to proceed?—were we not told that it was a wise course?—were we taunted by insinuations that we were yielding to physical force? No; we were opposed by a few Roman Catholic members on the second reading; but on the whole we were supported by the most cordial consent of this House. We were supported in the execution of that act by the ecclesiastical authorities of the Roman Catholic church, who opposed themselves to agitation. Did I not refer to their conduct, and to the support which we met with from men who had never joined repeal, as an encouragement to proceed in the same course? Mr. O'Connell never asked for the endowment of Maynooth. Conciliation Hall never demanded it; but there was a great body of Roman Catholic clergy and laity, who, seeing the temper and spirit of the government, from passing the endowment act, and from the manner in which we executed it, were inclined to support the government, in pursuing the same course. And it was much more in deference to their opinions than to any threats or agitation, that we did proceed in this course, and brought forward this measure. And when did I give notice of this measure of Maynooth? Did I give notice of it in consequence of the threatening aspect of the United States? Did I not give notice (in order that the country might not be taken by surprise)—did I not give notice during a period of calm—of suspension of agitation—of discontinuance of meetings? Did I not voluntarily, without any necessity—without any call for it, run the risk of exciting the Protestant feeling of this country, by a distinct declaration during the last session, that the subject of academical education should undergo the consideration of the government, and that the College of Maynooth should be included in that consideration? Did I not add, at that time, that that consideration should be conducted not in an adverse but in a friendly view? Did I not lead every man who heard me to infer, that it was the intention of the government to improve the institution of Maynooth, and increase the vote? We fulfilled the pledges which were given, and brought forward this measure. I have been taunted to-night with not having noticed on a former occasion the observation of the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Macaulay.) I did abstain from noticing the attack of the right hon. gentleman, and he seems very much disappointed that I did. He taunts me with having passed it over. I did not know that I was less inclined than others to notice these things, but I assigned to the right hon. gentleman my reason. I know the success of this measure was dependent on the support of hon. gentlemen opposite. Was it fitting in me to alienate that support by party attacks—was it not much more consistent with my duty (being, as I said, perfectly ready to take all the consequences of success or failure, yet feeling deeply satisfied that, after the proposal of this measure, the public interest required that it should be passed)—was it not, I say, more becoming, in my position, that I should concentrate my efforts to ensure the passing of this measure, rather than provoke party attacks, or indulge in party recrimination? Sir, powerful as is the right hon. gentleman—great as are his abilities; yet I do assure him it



was not a fear of the conflict with him that induced my forbearance. It was that sense of public duty, with reference to the importance of this measure, and to the effect upon Ireland of its failure, that led me resolutely to follow the course by which I can best secure its success. But, Sir, the right hon. gentleman, in spite of my wishes, compels me to notice his observations. The right hon. gentleman says, is it not very humiliating that you should have to propose this measure? Sir, I feel no humiliation in the discharge of a public duty. I should feel humiliated if, believing this measure to be of importance to the welfare of Ireland, I shrunk from proposing it for fear I should be charged with inconsistency. Then I should indeed think I was acting an unworthy part. But if I believe it to be a measure calculated to produce good in Ireland, to assuage the bitter feeling between the two countries—if I honestly think that it would have that result, so far from feeling any humiliation in proposing it, I own to the right hon. gentleman that I should feel perfectly satisfied both with the motives and with the act. The part which I should feel to be humiliating would be to shrink from the performance of a public duty, for fear the right hon. gentleman should point out some passage in my life in order to charge me with inconsistency. Now, as to the vote to Maynooth. I gave my support to it all the time I was in office. I voted for it in 1840. I voted with the right hon. gentleman. I spoke in favour of it when he was silent. I objected to the withdrawal of the vote, when it was endeavoured to obtain its discontinuance; and in office, seeing that I objected to the discontinuance of the vote, supporting that violation of principle with which it is charged, where is the inconsistency, instead of continuing an imperfect system of education by a vote of £9,000 a-year, that I now advocate an improvement of the building—that I wish to elevate the character of the education, to improve the position of the professors—to give a decent allowance for the education of the youth—where, I say, is the inconsistency of this, when I had previously voted for the continuance of the grant? And who was it that said he could not conceive the mind so frivolous that would vote for £9,000 a-year, and object to a fair and sufficient endowment? Who was it said, that some men would be reconciled to the maintenance of professors, provided they could starve them? Why, it was the right hon. gentleman himself, who, wishing to convince his constituents that he was not violating any principle by supporting the increased grant, made that defence of his own conduct; and then turned round on the government and said, “We were violating our principles,” not because we proposed to take it from the revenues of the church, but because we proposed to transform it from an annual vote, which it had been for fifty years, into a permanent grant, and increase the amount. I did not make any comment on the speech of the right hon. gentleman, because I followed the noble lord, who appeared to me in a generous spirit to fulfil that which I thought was at least a virtual engagement, namely, that if we would propose measures likely to conduce to the welfare of Ireland, without reference to party feelings or interests, we knew where there was a party to be found on whose support we could rely. Well, we did propose measures of this character, and then the right hon. gentleman comes down here bursting with indignation. I never saw a man who appeared so dissatisfied with a proposal, and the manner in which it has been received. He would appear to consider Irish discontent to be a particular dominion of his own. Now, what was the language held in the course of the last year? A motion was made by a noble lord, who must have the confidence of the right hon. gentleman, on the subject of Maynooth, in another place, and observe what were the declarations made in the last session of parliament. Lord Monteagle, a member of the late government, said:—“The present was just the moment when the government, after taking strong measures to enforce their own opinions, and to put down views adverse to their own, the present was the moment when they could most favourably introduce measures really tending to improve the character and condition of the Irish people.”

There was not a word then of agitation extorting such measures from us:—“A measure of the kind he had now proposed would, above all others, have the highly beneficial effect of showing the people of that country, that parliament and the government sympathized with them on a subject upon which it had hitherto been considered that government was either apathetic, most unwilling, or most adverse. The government might thus show that they truly desired to promote at once the spiritual and the temporal advancement of the people. The establishment of Maynooth ought

immediately to be placed upon a higher footing, so as to fit it for the reception and education of the better classes."

That was the language of the party opposed to me in the course of the last session. If we had done nothing—if we had trusted to measures of coercion—if we had proposed the annual vote for Maynooth, I am sure I see many hon. gentlemen opposite who would not have taken such a course. But might not the right hon. gentleman, actuated by the spirit which he has exhibited to night—might he not have been the man to say, "See the encouragement that hon. gentlemen of the party opposed to you generously gave you last year? They saw a calm in Ireland—they saw that a period had arrived when you might bring forward measures calculated to have a powerful effect upon Ireland. You have no cause for your apathy; we encouraged you to proceed—we gave you notice that you should have our support, and we now charge you with having abandoned a duty which you might easily have performed, consistent with your own principles, and in the performance of which you knew, from our assurances, you would have our support." We took a liberal course; we improved the institution and increased the vote; and then the right hon. gentleman comes forward and charges us with inconsistency and want of principle, and encourages, as much as he can, an attempt to defeat us in the measure which we have proposed—at least to extract from it every party advantage, although he cannot withhold his support from it. I must say, Sir, that such conduct is unworthy of his position in this House. I deeply regret that the renewed attacks of the right hon. gentleman have obliged me to make this reference to him, because, while I make it, I am anxious to do justice to the course which has been pursued by the noble lord and the party who support him. I do not want to take the gratitude of the Irish from those who have been their constant friends. We propose this measure from a belief that it will be conducive to the welfare of Ireland; but it is not right, on account of this temporary measure, that the obligations which the Roman Catholics owe to those who have been their constant friends, should be transferred from them to us. Be the measure what it may, we want to derive no other advantage from it than the conscientious conviction that we have done our duty in proposing it. When the right hon. gentleman talks of the supporters of the measure being opposed to the Protestant feeling of the country, I would ask who were so likely to suffer from that feeling as ourselves? Can he assign any reason for the proposal of this measure other than our belief that it would be beneficial to Ireland? What could have been easier for us than to have proposed the old vote, and to have resisted an increase by a large majority? We are told that no one asked for this measure. The argument of some of my hon. friends on this side of the House is, "You have proposed something that no one called for; there was no necessity for it—there was no emergency." Why, that is just what I have said. I say it is a contrast to the series of past concessions. So far from its being the result of agitation, it is the spontaneous, the voluntary act of her Majesty's government. And let me tell you, that is the cause why it is producing such an effect in Ireland; why it is producing there a feeling of contentment and gratitude. It is much more appreciated by those who have abstained from joining the ranks of repeal, and who have kept aloof from high feeling. It is felt by them, that the government have been influenced by feelings of kindness and conciliation to them. It is brought forward in the spirit with which the endowment act was introduced last session. We are now actuated by the same feeling, by the same motives. But it seems that the fear of America has had some effect. If I used an equivocal expression on a former occasion, do not the facts speak for themselves? Have we altered this measure in the slightest degree in consequence of the message of the President? Has not my right hon. friend (Sir James Graham) correctly stated that the outline of this measure was prepared in November last, when we were led to believe that the discussion on the subject of the Oregon territory would soon be brought to a close? Did not the late President refuse to present the papers to the senate, because he said he was of opinion that the negotiations would soon be brought to a successful termination? It was at that period that this measure was prepared. The speech of the present President did not induce us to add one shilling to the grant, or alter the measure in any way that would be likely to make it more acceptable to the people of Ireland. But seeing the temper with which it was received in Ireland, after it

had been proposed, was it not natural for me to say that I did rejoice, after having been compelled to use the expressions which I did, in consequence of the motion of the noble lord—was it not, I ask, natural that I should say I rejoiced to see the altered feeling which prevailed in Ireland, satisfied, as I was, that this measure was likely to prove a message of peace? But can the right hon. gentleman infer from that, that the fear of America had any reference to our proposal of this measure? Sir, this measure has not been extorted from us by agitation. We showed a resolution to contend against agitation with such means as the law of the land afforded us, without desiring to apply to parliament for any increased powers; and, with regard to the threatenings of the President of the United States, I have only to observe, that his language had no influence whatever on our conduct towards Ireland. So much for the construction that has been put upon the speech which I made the other night. Sir, I certainly will not enter, on the present occasion, and at the present hour, into the great question to which the hon. member has, by motion, directed the attention of the House. I think it would have been infinitely better for the hon. gentleman to have brought forward a substantive motion on this subject, rather than to have confined himself to a proposal for taking some £26,000 from the revenues of the Established Church for the endowment of Maynooth. I gave my opinion fully last session on the subject of the Irish Church. I did not on that occasion state, as the hon. gentleman has alleged, I disregarded the compact. The hon. gentleman said, I threw that compact overboard; but so far from that being the case, I distinctly stated at that time, that so far as a compact had weight in such a matter, that compact weighed fully with me in regard to the Established Church. But I added, that I would not rest the defence of the Established Church in Ireland merely on that compact—that I thought it would be unwise to rest the defence of the church merely on a compact—but that I considered it would be wise to show, and I thought it could be shown, that the establishment generally would justify the maintenance of that church, and that I did not therefore wish to rest it on the ground of compact alone. If the hon. gentleman on some other occasion brings forward a substantive motion on this subject, I shall be perfectly willing to meet him, and to show the grounds on which I have come to the same conclusion with Burke, with Sir John Newport, with Mr. Grattan, with Lord Plunkett, and with some of the most distinguished of the Roman Catholics themselves, as well as with their most tried friends, with regard to the maintenance of the Established Church in Ireland. The right hon. gentleman the member for Edinburgh says, that all those who vote against the motion of the hon. gentleman must be in favour of the Established Church in Ireland, and that all those who support that motion must be in favour of the total destruction of the establishment. I must say, that I do not think the right hon. gentleman was justified in putting the question in that position, considering the peculiar nature of the vote which is required to be given—and earnestly as the present measure has been proposed, so earnestly do I hope that it may not be encumbered with such a proposal as that made by the hon. gentleman. How has the measure been received in Ireland? Contrast the feelings in Ireland with the feelings that have been manifested in this country. When I proposed this measure, I certainly did not look, as the sole advantage to be derived from it, to the fact of some £26,000 a-year being given to Maynooth. I believed that the measure would be considered satisfactory to the Roman Catholics, and that it would be received by them—as in point of fact it has been received by them—not as a concession, not as a boon, but as an indication of kindly feelings towards them and towards Ireland by the government and the legislature. I confess I thought also, that the measure would have been favourably received by the Protestants, and that it would have a tendency to promote a better feeling between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. Sir, it has had that effect. How few are the petitions that have been received from Ireland against the measure! In fact, I doubt whether there have not been as many petitions from Ireland in favour of the measure as against it. I do think it most honourable to the Protestant feeling in Ireland, that so many members of the Established Church have come forward, forgetting their past animosities, forgetting their former causes of difference, advising you to pass this measure, and rejoicing in an act of liberality, and, as they consider it, of justice, towards their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects.

I do think that the passing of the act in the spirit in which it has been proposed will have that desirable effect. But it should not be forgotten that the Protestants who have petitioned in favour of the measure expected, when they did so, that it would be passed in the manner in which it had been brought forward. They certainly did not contemplate that the House would take the funds that were proposed to be given for the support of Maynooth from the revenues of the Established Church. They rejoice in the measure as an act of liberality—not that they care for the money, or attached any great importance to a vote of £26 000, but they rejoice in it as a proof of the kindly feelings that are entertained by the government and the legislature towards their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen. I do not say that the right hon. gentleman intends to interrupt this kindly feeling. I entirely repudiate, on the part of the right hon. gentleman, any such dishonourable views; but still I think that, if we are now to announce to the Protestants of Ireland that we mean to alter the character of the measure, and are prepared to take this grant for the endowment of Maynooth out of the revenues of the Established Church, the kindly feeling that now manifests itself on their part in favour of the grant will cease, and we may expect to find opposition instead of countenance from them. Sir, I rose, however, less to expatiate on such topics than to deny utterly the justice of that construction which was put upon my words; and if I have been diverted from the course which I meant to pursue, if I have said one word throwing impediments in the way of any gentleman on the opposite side of the House giving his support to this measure, on account of any reference to the language which has been mentioned—I deeply regret that circumstance; but at the same time I felt that I had no alternative, after the repetition of the taunt of the right hon. gentleman, but to satisfy him by noticing his attacks. But, sir, while I give hon. gentlemen opposite entire credit for the motives which induce them to support this motion, and while I am quite willing to transfer to them, on account of their uniform advocacy of Roman Catholic claims, all the merit which is due to our proposal, and all the gratitude of the Roman Catholics arising from it, still my anxiety remains unabated, that in the present state of public feeling in Ireland, this measure may receive the sanction of the House. I hope, therefore, the hon. gentleman will not succeed in his motion. I also hope that other motions in opposition to this measure may be equally unsuccessful. The motion of my hon. and learned friend the member for the University of Cambridge, in particular, seems expressly fitted to meet the wishes of those who are willing that the funds for the support of the College of Maynooth should be taken out of the revenues of the Established Church. It was perfectly open to my hon. friend to take, as the ground of his amendment, the principle that the vote ought to be annual instead of permanent; or my hon. friend might have objected to any increase of the vote at all; but, instead of adopting either of these courses, he has given notice of the motion which will compel hon. members who wish to see the funds for the purpose of this grant taken out of the revenues of the Established Church, and not out of the consolidated fund, or by an annual vote of parliament, to vote with him. [Mr. Law expressed his dissent.] Surely my hon. friend does not mean to deny the accuracy of the view which I have taken of his amendment. The motion of my hon. friend is, that the fund necessary for the support of Maynooth shall not be taken out of the consolidated fund. It is not that it shall be voted annually by parliament, but that it shall not be taken in the particular manner proposed by the government. [Mr. Law: Read the terms of the motion.] The notice stands thus in the book—"Mr. Law—On the motion for going into committee on Maynooth College bill, to move that it is the opinion of this House, that the several sums of money proposed to be payable by this bill, and the schedule thereto annexed, shall not be charged upon or payable by the commissioners of her Majesty's treasury, out of the consolidated fund of the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland."

The terms of the motion are—not that the amount shall be voted annually by parliament, but simply that it shall not be taken out of the consolidated fund. Now I want to know, how can any hon. gentleman refuse to vote for that motion who wishes to see the amount taken from the funds of the Established Church; or whether my hon. friend would not appear to be satisfied, if he can, by a combination of parties of extremely opposite views, succeed in defeating this measure? I wish to see those who desire to defeat this measure divide on the principle upon which it is founded.

I do think it is perfectly consistent that hon. friends of mine who dissent from the measure, or wish for its withdrawal, to object altogether to the grant, or to take the sense of the House on the propriety of increasing it. I think it perfectly fair for hon. gentlemen opposite, who consider that the revenues of the Established Church ought to supply the funds proposed to be given to Maynooth College, to make a motion to that effect, though at the same time I trust there are many hon. gentlemen who, agreeing in the principle contended for by the hon. gentleman, yet consider it on the whole better, having regard to the state of public feeling in Ireland since the measure has been proposed, to forego their peculiar principles, in order to insure the passing of the measure rather than see it defeated. But I do not believe that any permanent good can be derived to any party from the defeat of the measure by a combination of men of opposite feelings and principles. I do hope, therefore, that if there be a majority of the House who do not agree entirely in this measure, but who consider that some better plan might be proposed, yet, on the whole, preferring that it should pass to its failure, will give her Majesty's government their support on the present occasion; and when the bill is disposed of, if you are then inclined to censure our conduct—if you think that measures of this kind had better be proposed by those who consistently supported the Catholic claims, then take your course, and we are perfectly prepared to abide by the result. But believing this measure to be necessary, and knowing that it would meet with opposition, we thought it a more manly, more honourable, course towards the House, towards hon. members of the opposite party, as well as towards our own friends, and also towards the people of Ireland, that we should encounter the stream of public indignation, rather than that we should shrink from the discharge of our public duty, and, from a fear of being taunted with inconsistency, refuse to take the course which we thought required by the public interest.

On a division, the numbers were; Ayes, 322; Noes, 148; majority, 174. The House then went into committee, *pro forma*, and resumed; committee to sit again.

APRIL 28, 1845.

The resolution of the committee on the grant from the consolidated fund for Maynooth was reported. On the question that it be read a second time,—Mr. Law moved as an amendment “That the report be taken into further consideration that day six months.”

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: Sir, as I have already had the opportunity on three several occasions of stating fully to the House the motives that have influenced her Majesty's government in introducing this measure, and their general views respecting it, and of answering questions put to me in the course of the debate as to their ulterior objects, I shall think it unnecessary on this, the fourth occasion, to trouble the House with many observations. Sir, I consider the present motion to be precisely the same as that which we discussed upon the second reading of the bill. The hon. and learned gentleman, the member for the University of Cambridge, distinctly avows that his object is to defeat the measure. The issue, therefore, on the present occasion, is precisely the same as that for which we contended on the second reading of the bill, and those who voted for the second reading of the bill will, I think, feel themselves under an equal obligation to vote now against the proposition of the hon. and learned gentleman. The hon. and learned gentleman's proposal was supported by the hon. gentleman, the member for Ashton-under-Lyne. That hon. gentleman, I understand, is the organ and representative of the great body of public opinion in this country which is not unfriendly to the voluntary principle; and yet I was surprised to hear in the course of the speech of the hon. gentleman, that if this measure had been proposed originally by me—if this grant, instead of being brought forward as a permanent, had been proposed as an annual one; or if I now consented, instead of proposing a permanent measure, to ask for an annual grant, that he should be prepared to acquiesce in that proposal, to grant the whole sum which I propose of £26,000, if it were merely an annual vote, although he feels it his duty to contend with the utmost vehemence against it as a permanent vote. Now, Sir, I cannot reconcile the hon. gentleman's opinions upon the voluntary principle with his readiness to support the vote of an annual grant; and I cannot understand how, against the spirit of at least the great majority of those who have

presented petitions against this bill, if we merely make the change of converting the vote from a permanent to an annual one, he would support the measure. Sir, I think there is little difference in point of principle between the raising the sum of £26,000 yearly, or embodying it in a bill permanently. I think the former would amount to almost as strong an engagement on our part—unless there were some very strong and conclusive reasons for its withdrawal—as to propose now a vote of £26,000 permanently; and that it would, in point of fact, be virtually an engagement for its continuance little less binding than if we inserted it in a permanent bill. But I cannot consent to purchase the hon. gentleman's support by making that change. Sir, in the first place, I believe that it would purchase little support from those hon. gentlemen who disapprove of the grant; and even if it purchased much support, I should not now be disposed to make the change; but I believe that in Ireland it would totally alter the character of the measure. Sir, I believe that it would be considered as an indication of distrust, and that the alteration would be completely at variance with that spirit in which I profess to bring it forward. On that account, therefore, it is wholly out of my power to consent to that alteration, and I shall do all that it is in my power to do to prevail upon the House to pass the measure in its present shape, and as a permanent grant. Sir, I must also be permitted to say, witnessing the feeling that prevails in this country, that I think there will be a great advantage in avoiding the absolute necessity for an annual grant upon this subject. Sir, I do firmly believe that by that means the present ferment will in a great measure cease. I believe that the example of the Protestant population of Ireland will not be lost upon this country. We cannot deny that the feeling of the Protestant population of Ireland with respect to this vote, is materially different from that of the Protestant population of England; and I believe that one great advantage of the vote is the connecting link that it forms between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics of that country. Happen what may, I do believe that from the example set by the great portion of the Protestants of Ireland—from the wish which I believe is cordially entertained by many, or at least a great portion of the Protestant body, to conciliate their Roman Catholic brethren, and put an end to these discussions—I do believe that that wish will have a tendency to abate religious animosity there. But certainly whatever be the issue of the present measure, I should contemplate with the greatest pain and regret the prospect of that annual agitation which must be the inevitable consequence of an annual grant. Sir, I may be told that there will be a motion brought forward to repeal the bill in the next session of parliament. I consider if any such discussion should then arise, that it will be of a totally different character than if the vote had been merely an annual and isolated one. So much with respect to the general feelings I entertain upon the subject, and which I thought it right to state before I notice the speech of the right hon. gentleman, the member for Northampton. I must observe, that with regard to my conduct in 1829, the right hon. gentleman has referred to the course I took with respect to the removal of the Roman Catholic disabilities; and the right hon. gentleman, after expressing his regret at the inconsistency of public men, has referred to-night, as he has a perfect right to do, to the course I pursued in 1829 with regard to the Roman Catholic Relief bill. The right hon. gentleman says, he thinks it is greatly to be regretted, both with reference to my own character, and that of the class to which I belong, that of public men, that I did not on that occasion retire from office, at the same time cordially supporting the measure for the relief of Roman Catholic disabilities. Sir, I admit, with the right hon. gentleman, that there may be many occasions on which it would be the duty of a public man to relinquish office, rather than propose a measure contrary to the principles he had heretofore supported. I think the propriety of his taking that course must mainly depend upon the effect which his retirement might have upon the success of the particular measure which he believed to be necessary for the public good. Sir, I believe it to be perfectly honourable and just to do so. I believe the right hon. gentleman, the late vice-president of the Board of Trade, was fully justified in relinquishing office at the time he did, and the right hon. gentleman thinks that I should have pursued the same course in 1829. Sir, that is precisely the course I wished to pursue, and which I intended to pursue. Until within a month of the period when I myself consented to bring forward a mea-

sure for the relief of Roman Catholic disabilities, I did contemplate retirement from office, not because I shrank from the responsibility of proposing the measure—not because I feared the charge of inconsistency—not because I was not prepared to make the sacrifice of private friendship and political connection; but because honestly believing that my retirement might promote the success of the measure which I then thought necessary, I thought I might assist my noble friend in carrying that measure were I to make the sacrifice of office, and to give, as I intended, a cordial support in my private capacity to that measure. But, Sir, when did I change my opinion? I changed it when it was demonstrated to me that it was necessary I should make the sacrifice—that I should retain office; but when it was shown to me that, however humble my abilities might be, yet considering the situation which I held, that with my retirement from office the carrying of that measure would become totally impossible; when it was proved to me that there were objections in the highest quarter which could not be overcome, unless I was prepared to make the sacrifice of much that was dear to me; when it was intimated to me by my noble friend, that it was the intention of the highest authorities of the Church of England to offer the most decided opposition to the measure; when my noble friend intimated to me that he thought, if I persevered in my intention to retire, success was out of the question; it was then that I did not hesitate to say, “I will not expose others to the obloquy and the suspicion from which I myself shrink. I know all the consequences of my being the person to propose the relief of the Roman Catholics from their present disabilities; but the moment I am convinced that the obstructions to the success of the measure will be infinitely increased by my retirement, then I will set the example of making the sacrifice, and, be the consequences what they may, I will propose the measure.” Sir, these are the facts of the case, and I must say, that I do think I acted a more honourable part in consenting to retain office and proposing that measure—that I took a part more for the character of a public man, than if I had said to my sovereign and my colleagues, “You shall be exposed to the obloquy of proposing this measure while you still retain office; I will advise the Crown to give its assent to the measure, but I will shrink from the responsibility of bringing it forward.” Sir, whatever taunts may now be thrown out—I must say that believing this measure advantageous to the public—foreseeing the opposition with which it was likely to be encountered, I now, in spite of all these taunts and sarcasms, again say, that I think it is more becoming in me to propose this measure, and submit to its consequences, rather than say, “I think it necessary; but I advise you on the opposite side of the House to come forward and expose yourselves to the responsibility of proposing it.” So much, Sir, for the principles on which I think public men ought to act in retaining office. If I believed now that my relinquishment of office would facilitate the carrying of this measure, I should unhesitatingly prefer the relinquishment of office to the loss of this measure. Sir, with respect to the reference made by the right hon. gentleman, the member for Perth, to an interview which took place, seven years ago, with a deputation from the Church of Scotland, I must say, that of that deputation I have so imperfect a recollection, that until my hon. friend (Mr. Pringle) rose to speak, or at least until he referred to it himself, I had not the least idea that he was one of that deputation. I think the right hon. gentleman says that it was seven years since that interview. Now, I must say, that when he stated that a reverend divine had taken a note of what had passed on that occasion—I must say, that I wish he had given me an opportunity of stating at the time, whether I acquiesced or not in his statement. I should liked to have had an opportunity of revising the whole of that conversation. Sir, I have not the least doubt that I stated then that I thought the Established Church of Scotland had a common cause with the Established Church of England—that I thought the cause of establishments as dis severed from the voluntary principle, was a common cause. No doubt I stated then what I feel now—my devotion to the principles of the faith I profess. I have not the slightest doubt, also, although I have no record of the conversation, no recollection of the proceedings—but, seeing that at the time a religious flame was excited throughout the continent—seeing that in Holland, Belgium, and Prussia, a great deal of religious excitement prevailed—I do believe that I viewed with the greatest uneasiness and alarm

the prospect of a religious contest in this country. I think it probable that I said, foreseeing from the disputes in the Prussian States that there might be a great struggle for ascendancy between Protestants and Roman Catholics—that I feared the approaching revival of those times when, instead of being engaged in political conflicts, we should be engaged in such religious disputes as agitated Europe three hundred years ago. Sir, of this I am confident, that I said nothing to encourage hostility towards the Roman Catholics. I never heard of that conversation, from the time of its taking place till the present moment—and it is said to have taken place seven years since—nor did I ever hear a whisper of it till I saw it in the newspapers. Sir, with respect to these expressions about “Popery,” I must say that they are very contrary to the language I had been always in the habit of using. It is very easy for a man, speaking of the Roman Catholics, to substitute the word “Popery,” and we have been told that there is no difference between them; but as the matter took place seven years ago, I can only say that, having no recollection of it, I cannot acquiesce in the correctness of the report of the rev. gentleman. I should like to have heard the interlocutory observations; but, in short, I cannot undertake, when the rev. gentleman says he made a note of it at the time, to recollect the precise expressions. I never since made any reference to it; and, considering how my time has been occupied for the last seven years, I can only say that I am not prepared to give an unqualified and decisive assent to the hon. gentleman’s version of my words. I have no recollection of them; but I greatly doubt whether any of the observations I made had precisely the meaning which he has attributed to them. Sir, this I know, that during the whole time I was opposed to the Roman Catholic claims, I never encouraged the presentation of a single petition against them—I never raised a “No Popery” cry—I advised those who consulted me to leave it all to the deliberate consideration of the legislature—and I never was a party to any cry which might impede the progress of Catholic Emancipation. Sir, I must say, that if it was my object to form a combination against Popery, and to obstruct the views of her Majesty’s late government, it is remarkable that I volunteered to come forward, session after session, to support this grant to Maynooth; that in 1841 I did all I could to prevail on my hon. friends who were adverse to the grant, not to press it to a division, but to permit the vote to pass, and I said I would not be a party to any opposition to it. Sir, the general temper in which I spoke may be presumed from the speech of the hon. gentleman, now an hon. baronet, opposite, who spoke after me, and who in 1841 could not be considered as very friendly to our party. In referring to my speech, the hon. gentleman made these observations:—“I think it would be more prudent for the hon. gentleman opposite to follow the advice of the right hon. gentleman the member for Tamworth, who has done himself so much honour by the course he has dared to take on this question, and for which he will doubtless gain credit out of doors.”

Then with respect to this vote for Maynooth, when I was Secretary for Ireland, in 1813, I proposed it to the House; and in 1841, when there was a great deal of religious excitement, and when there was some doubt as to the course that would be pursued by her Majesty’s government, and more especially with regard to their religious policy towards Ireland in 1841, I did not shrink from avowing my opinions in favour of that vote. I said that we had entered into a virtual and substantial engagement, and that it was impossible for parliament, without hurting and wounding the feelings of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, to withdraw that which had been continued to them for nearly forty years. Sir, in saying this, I entertain all my former feelings and opinions with respect to the faith to which I belong; and I do believe that the vote I propose is not adverse to the interests of the Protestants of Ireland, either with a view to their temporal or religious principles. Sir, I think it utterly impossible to withhold this grant: I cannot advise the course which has been suggested by the right hon. gentleman, the member for the University of Cambridge—he calls upon us to protect existing interests, but warns us against any alliance with the Roman Catholic religion. Sir, I believe the Roman Catholics of Ireland generally are very indifferent as to any alliance with the state; but how the hon. gentleman could suppose that her Majesty’s government would come forward and advise that this, whether it be an alliance or a connection, or whatever term you may apply to it, should now be dissolved—that we should protect existing



interests merely by withholding any future grant, and giving some principal sum which might provide for the claims of that body—with regard to that I can only say, that it is utterly out of my power to be a party to such a proposition. I think such a course would be implying distrust, and subjecting to imputations, which I for one cannot be a party to. Sir, I do not bring forward this measure under the futile pretence that it will promote the Protestant religion in Ireland—I do not bring it forward under the supposition that it will undermine the Roman Catholic religion—I do not propose it with any such views; but I believe it will produce an effect upon the feelings of those who will be the recipients of the grant—that it will dispose them to think more kindly of the people of this country, and that they will not retire from Maynooth receiving your bounty and yet indignant at your parsimony. Sir, I say it is unworthy of this country to propose to give the means of education to the Roman Catholic priesthood of Ireland, and then to give them a pittance which is only calculated to excite angry feelings, and make them dissatisfied with the niggardliness of your vote. Sir, in that respect I feel that the spirit in which the grant has been made, the confidence which it has evinced, the refusal to interfere with the doctrines or tenets of that religion, will make it still more acceptable; and I believe that Protestantism will derive greater advantages on account of the cordial feeling with which the grant has been conferred, than if we continued to vote a sum of £9,000 annually; and therefore it is that, with strong regard and attachment to the principles of the Protestant religion, I feel myself at perfect liberty to make this grant. Sir, I cannot help saying that I deeply regret the manifestation of public feeling which has been evinced in this country. I will not say that I was prepared for it to the full extent to which it has gone. The hon. gentleman who spoke last has referred to it, and has expressed his apprehension that the feeling between Ireland and this country may be exasperated by what has passed. Sir, I can only say for myself, that the manifestation of that feeling in this country, much as I respect the public feeling here—but that manifestation of it is far from inducing me to relax in the course which I have pursued, and it will only impose an additional obligation on me to persevere steadily in the course I have adopted—I do not say in violation and opposition to popular opinion, for I have no desire to run counter to it; but this I feel, it is absolutely necessary to prove to the Roman Catholics of Ireland that the manifestation of that feeling should not induce public men to swerve from the course which, at any rate, appears to have produced kindly feelings among those in whose favour it is to be given. Sir, I fear it will not be in my power to satisfy altogether the expectations of my Roman Catholic fellow-subjects. From the avowals which are made of what is necessary for their satisfaction, I am bound to say that I fear it will be impossible, if these are their expectations, entirely to satisfy them; but of this I will give them the assurance, that, in office or out of office, that which I have undertaken to do, I will to the utmost of my power fulfil. It may be short of their expectations; but they never shall have cause to charge me with abandoning their interests, to the extent to which I feel, consistently with my public duty, I can promote them.

Amendment negatived; the resolution read a second time, and ordered to be incorporated in the Maynooth College bill.

## CORN LAWS—TRADE WITH AUSTRALIA.

MAY 8, 1845.

Mr. Hutt presented a petition from persons interested in land in Australia, praying for the admission of corn, the produce of that country, at the same rate of duty as Canada corn was now subject to; and moved for a committee of the whole House to take into consideration a resolution based upon the prayer of the petitioners.

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, I cannot think the hon. member who has just sat down (Mr. Ward) has taken a course very likely to induce hon. members on this side, who might be wavering in their views on this question, to give their votes in favour of the present proposition. Other hon. members who have preceded him on that side have said, that the apprehensions respecting the introduction of Canadian corn

were groundless. The hon. member expects the free importation of American corn through Canada, without payment of duty. Other gentlemen who preceded him have assuaged the alarm felt on this side, and have invited their support at the present moment, on the ground that their apprehensions with respect to Canadian corn are entirely unfounded. The hon. member, addressing himself to this side of the House, expresses his satisfaction that his anticipations will be entirely realised, and that an immense importation will take place into this country, not of Canadian corn, but of American corn smuggled into Canada, and avoiding the duty. [Mr. Ward: I did not say smuggled.] The hon. member seemed to think that all precautionary regulations would be vain to prevent the introduction of American corn. [Mr. Ward: I said, that with their growing trade the corn would come in in spite of you.] I believe the hon. member's anticipations are in reality unfounded, and that the statements of those who have previously told the House, that there is no great need for alarm on account of the importation of wheat or flour from Canada, are much more likely to correspond with the fact. Sir, it is certainly my intention to give my vote in opposition to the proposal of the hon. member for Gateshead. There are two other propositions which are to be made in the course of the present session on the subject of the corn-laws: there is the proposal for their total repeal, and there is also the proposal which is to be discussed in the course of about a fortnight, on the motion of the noble lord the member for the city of London, to this effect:—"That the present corn-law tends to check improvement in agriculture, produces uncertainty in all farming speculations, and holds out to the owners and occupiers of lands prospects of special advantage which it fails to secure; that this House will take the said laws into consideration, with a view to such cautious and deliberate arrangements as may be most beneficial to all classes of her Majesty's subjects."

We are, therefore, to have a discussion on the absolute repeal of the law, and we are also to have a discussion on the policy of making an alteration in the existing law, "coupled with those cautious and deliberate arrangements which may be most beneficial to all classes of her Majesty's subjects." These two proposals are to be submitted to the consideration of the House; and, not satisfied with the prospect of the very extensive question to be raised by the hon. member for Wolverhampton, and by the more limited and cautious proposal of the noble lord the member for the city of London, here is another proposal brought forward by the hon. member for Gateshead, the effect of which is to admit the produce of one part of our colonial empire, and one part only, to privileges which another part of our colonial empire—namely, Canada, possesses. When in the year 1842, as the organ of the government, I brought forward the question of the corn-laws, an arrangement applicable to the introduction of all corn, whether foreign or colonial, was made by that law, which received the sanction of the House. Under that law, when wheat in this country was below a certain price, the maximum duty on foreign corn was to be 20s. At the same time an arrangement was made which was thought beneficial to the colonies as compared with the law previously existing, which imposed an amount of duty upon the importation of corn the produce of our colonies, the minimum of which was 1s., and the maximum 5s. Under the existing law, when corn bears higher price than 58s., then in that case colonial corn, from whatever colony it comes, might be brought in subject to a duty of 1s. The maximum of the duty on colonial corn was 5s., as compared with 20s. upon foreign corn, which was the maximum. Sir, I recollect that when that proposal was made on the part of her Majesty's government, it was objected to by many hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House, as imposing a discriminating duty far too favourable to the colonies. Many hon. gentlemen stated, that they thought a higher duty should be imposed on colonial as compared with foreign. But many of those hon. gentlemen who opposed the discriminating duty of 1842, who thought it would foster the colonial at the expense of the foreign trade, are now, however, prepared to support the proposition of the hon. gentleman. They are prepared to incur the inconvenience of fostering these colonial interests as compared with the foreign, on the intelligible ground that considerations of justice should overbear considerations of policy. and that as they had given a certain boon to one colony—namely, Canada, they ought now to give it to the others. Sir, as I view the proposition of the hon. gentleman, I think that, notwithstanding the consideration

he has given to the subject, perhaps to the exclusion of others, he has greatly exaggerated the advantages which it will confer upon the colonies and upon the agricultural interest of this country. The hon. gentleman says, that if you permit Australian corn to be brought in at a duty of *5s.* when corn is at *58s.*, and at *1s.* when corn is above that price, that the agricultural interest will derive indirectly a great benefit from the facilities of emigration, and thus, getting rid of the surplus population, and that in consequence of the increased import of corn, there will be an additional amount of prosperity to the Australian colonies as regards their agriculture. I think that by dwelling too much upon this point, he has overrated the importance of the measure both to this country and Australia. But it is said, that as Canada is in possession of this boon, even at the expense of some inconvenience, incurring, as we did, the censure of hon. gentlemen opposite, who have a great objection to discriminating duties, considerations of justice must now induce us to grant the same benefit to Australia. It is said that the Canada Corn bill was proposed upon that ground, and as Canada is in possession of that privilege we are bound by every principle of justice to extend it to Australia and our other colonies. Sir, I wish to consider the question of, whether or no considerations of justice do compel us to extend to Australia the same privilege as has been conferred on Canada. Sir, I beg to call the attention of the House to the position in which Canada was placed when this Corn-bill was introduced; I mean the commercial position, and the privileges to which Canada was entitled under the then existing law. At that time no duty was imposed in Canada upon wheat or flour imported into Canada from the United States, and at that time no duty was imposed in Canada on any wheat or flour imported from any part of the world, and Canada was at that time entitled to import flour into this country at a low colonial rate of duty. Wheat therefore might, before the Corn-law of 1842, be imported into Canada from the United States free of duty—might there be subjected to a manufacturing process, and then the flour produced from that American wheat might be brought into this country, not at the American but at the Canadian duty. Sir, this was stated very strongly by the people of Canada in a memorial presented to this House at the time of the discussion on the Canada Corn-bill. The petition of the President of the Quebec Board of Trade stated, that hitherto foreign wheat and flour had been permitted to be imported into that colony free of duty—that by far the greater part of that corn had been again, after being converted into flour, exported to other countries. There was thus a distinct admission that the United States was likely to send in corn at a low rate of duty; for the greater part of that flour was the produce of American wheat, brought into Canada, and paying no duty whatever. The petitioners then stated, that the transport of such wheat and flour afforded the means of employment to many thousands of the population over their lakes and rivers to the extent of 3000 miles; and that it gave employment to a large number of vessels in the intercolonial trade, the whole of such vessels being worked and manned by her Majesty's subjects. The petitioners expressed alarm lest the trade might be interfered with in consequence of the proposed alteration in the law. They asked, at the same time, that their produce might be admitted at a nominal rate of duty. Now, Sir, what was the answer given by my noble friend the secretary for the colonies? A law was passed in 1842, applying to Canada as well as to all the other colonial possessions of the country. My noble friend said—"I cannot consent to admit the produce of Canada at a low nominal duty into this country; but if you, for the first time, will impose a duty upon American wheat brought into Canada, I then will propose as part of the general arrangement of the Corn-laws, that Canadian corn produce shall be admitted here at a duty of *1s.* per quarter."

Therefore, in the position of Canada, it was peculiar, and the arrangement made with that colony was one which rested not on the political state of the colony, but its particular position with respect to the trade it was carrying on. Sir, I must say, that no engagement made by this government with Canada should stand in the way of substantial justice; but the engagements then entered into with it were in respect to the trade it was then carrying on in corn. Canada accepted the terms; and at the time the bill was introduced passed a law imposing, for the first time, a duty of *3s.* on American wheat, giving up the advantage it had previously enjoyed of bringing it in duty free; and it was then that the privilege was given to that colony to

import corn at a low rate of duty. Sir, we did not then extend it to the other North American colonies. The question was put to us, whether we would not extend it to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward's Island?—all of them being exporting colonies. The answer then given was, that there was no such engagement respecting those colonies, and that there was no intention to extend to them the same privileges. Sir, the hon. gentleman now says, "As you have conceded these privileges to Canada, I call on you to give the same advantages to Australia." He calls on us to place Australia on the same footing. But, Sir, that is not the object of his motion. His proposition is to admit Australian corn duty free. If Canadian corn be admitted duty free, without any tax being levied on American corn brought into Canada, then I am ready to admit that the position of Canada and Australia are identical. But that is not the case. When the hon. gentleman proposes that Australian corn should be brought in here at a duty of 1s., he does not propose that there should be any corresponding obligation on that colony to levy a duty on the foreign corn brought into it. Sir, I contend that the position of the two colonies is substantially different. As my hon. friend has said, if you permit Australian corn to be brought into this country duty free, without imposing upon it the necessity of levying a duty upon Chilian corn, or corn the produce of any other foreign possession brought into Australia, Canada will have a right to ask that Canadian corn be admitted duty free, without continuing that duty on American corn which she imposed for the first time in 1842. Sir, in the last year the hon. gentleman proposed that corn, the produce of the Indian empire and the Cape of Good Hope, should have the same privileges conceded to it as was now sought for Australia. We then were not prepared to say, that it was wise or expedient to disturb the arrangement of 1842, or make it more extensive in its operation; but if I am compelled to entertain the question, I should say that I should rather consider the condition of the colonies generally, than give to one the privileges which under peculiar circumstances have been given to Canada. Sir, I think it better, once for all, if I have no other alternative, to decide the question as regards the whole of our colonial possessions. I am not inviting the hon. gentleman to make the proposal, but I think it is preferable to the one he is making now. I will venture to say that, after the motion of the hon. gentleman shall have been carried, it will be impossible to rest there. That is your object. ["Hear."] You admit that? Your object, then, is not to do justice to a single colony, but to bring in a measure which will involve the necessity of constant alterations in the Corn-law. Sir, an attempt has been made to gain support by saying, that the measure is small and limited in its operation; but in the same breath it is said, that the whole of the colonies are entitled to have their claims taken into consideration. If that be so, we are entitled to know the full extent of the measure. The hon. gentleman says other colonies have not asked for this boon; but I say they have. If you pass this measure, how can you resist the demands of India? Why should we not include India? India has asked for the same privilege, and stands in the same position as Australia. So soon as this bill shall have received the royal assent, then the hon. gentleman will come forward, either this session or next, claiming for India precisely the same concessions. The hon. gentleman says he did not say that. [Mr. Hutt: I distinctly stated that I meant to try the whole question.] Surely, then, if the hon. gentleman means to try the whole question, he will admit to me, that instead of passing this bill for Australia, and endeavouring to get the consent of the House by telling them that it is a small and limited measure, and that the agriculturists need not be under any alarm—that their apprehensions are without foundation—that his course is not very intelligible. When he says, that he intends to try the whole question, and, having passed this measure, that he intends to ask the House to pass others, I cannot understand why he limits the proposition to the colony of Australia. Sir, the East India Company have preferred the same claim; and why should we not apply the same principle to the one as to the other? Is the hon. gentleman prepared to fix a duty of 3s. upon all corn imported into British India? With respect to the colonies of North America, I am not at all clear that it would be to their advantage that that duty should be applied to the corn imported into them, in order to place them on the same footing as Canada. Two successive measures for the alteration of the Corn-laws have been introduced. The right hon. gentleman the member for Taunton has admitted, that unless there are

some strong and cogent reasons for altering laws of this nature, it is unwise to create apprehension in the public mind by such alteration. I believe that apprehension would be excited, not only by this proposal, but by the distinct declaration that it is meant to be the precursor of several other proposals of a similar nature. Looking, then, at the advantages to be gained by this bill, and at the consequences of the alteration of the bill of 1842—comparing the practical advantage to be gained, with the inconvenience and embarrassment which may arise, either from the total admission of colonial corn at once, or from the admission of a precedent which is to lead to other alterations, my belief is, that the evil outweighs, and more than counterbalances the good. If I felt that it was a claim of justice to Australia, that claim ought, of course, to outweigh all other considerations. But I do not consider the case of Australia identical with that of Canada; I think that the circumstances of the two colonies are different; and, not admitting the claim of justice, I am not willing, on considerations of policy and expediency, for so limited an amount of good, to disturb the arrangement which was made in 1842 with regard to corn, and for these reasons I shall give my vote against the motion.

The motion was negatived by a majority of 54.

## SUPPRESSION OF THE SLAVE-TRADE.

MAY 16, 1845.

The question having been put that the Speaker do leave the chair, to go into committee of supply,—

Viscount Palmerston, drew the attention of the House to the subject of the annual return of the slave-trade papers, and wished to know at what period they would be laid on the table?

SIR R. PEEL: Sir, with respect to the period at which the slave-trade papers for the present year should be presented, I certainly have a confident hope that they will be presented at an earlier period than the noble lord was in the habit of presenting them. I believe, during the noble lord's tenure of office, they were very rarely presented before the concluding part of the session, owing, no doubt, to the claims which the other duties of the office made on the noble lord's time. I assure the noble lord that the business of the foreign office has not diminished since he left, and if that excuse were to prevail, it would be valid on the present occasion. But although the business of the foreign office has not diminished, yet I hope the slave-trade papers will be presented at an early period; and it will then be seen from the perusal of those papers whether the noble lord's imputations on the present government, of lukewarmness and indifference with regard to the continuance of the slave-trade, is well founded or not. The noble lord will then have an opportunity, if he thinks fit, of bringing forward any motion criminating the government, a better mode, I cannot help thinking, of testing the opinion of the House with respect to the conduct of the government, than to make, as the noble lord has so frequently done, speeches on the general subject not leading to any issue. The noble lord, on the present, as on several former occasions, has passed a very warm, and I am bound to say a merited eulogium on himself, on account of the efforts which he has made for the suppression of the slave-trade. I never denied his merit. I believe his labours have been most assiduous and successful for the suppression of that traffic. I give him full credit for his exertions; but he seems to think that his merits in this respect have not been sufficiently admitted by this House and the public, and so about once in every month he takes an opportunity of calling our attention to them. Two or three times in the course of every session he reminds us of all the treaties which he made with African princes, his treaty with the Imaum of Muscat, and not only the original treaty, but some addition to it, which was the means of conferring the greatest possible advantages on humanity and the civilized world in general. The noble lord alluded to some points on which he knows I am precluded from entering, namely, the pending negotiations with France. The time must shortly arrive when the course pursued by her Majesty's government will be made known to the House, but in the mean time the noble lord is aware that my lips are sealed. I am pretty

confident the noble lord expects that there is some arrangement about to be made with France, which will be much more successful for the suppression of the slave-trade than any now in force. He seems to think, that by means of a blockade of the coast, and treaties with the native powers on the coast, we shall be enabled consistently with the law of nations to destroy the baracoons; and that, if such a course should be taken, the joint action of France and England in a vigorous attempt to suppress the slave-trade would be most successful and effectual. This being the case, I am sorry to see the noble lord attempt to spoil the effect of such a combination by a premature discussion. It is quite clear that the noble lord anticipates the most beneficial effects from the pending negotiations. The noble lord asks whether it is true that Brazil has notified to the British government, that she considers the subsidiary convention, which was to be in force, I think, for fifteen years, for the suppression of the slave-trade, at an end? The noble lord has been rightly informed. The Brazilian government has thought fit to signify that it does consider that convention, thus enduring for fifteen years after the year 1830, is at an end. The state of the case is this. Our original treaty was with Portugal, Brazil being at that time a dependency of Portugal, and being bound in respect to the slave-trade by the engagements entered into with us on the part of Portugal. In 1825, I think, the separation between Brazil and Portugal took place, and Brazil in 1826, on her separate account as an independent state, entered into an engagement with this country to the same effect as that previously existing with Portugal for the suppression of the slave-trade. I think Brazil, within three years after the ratification of the treaty, was bound to declare the suppression of the slave-trade, that is to say, its suppression by law, not, I am afraid, its actual practical suppression. That brought us to the year 1830; and afterwards there was a convention of, I think, rather doubtful import, as to whether or not, after a lapse of fifteen years after that period of its suppression by law, Brazil had a right to declare the subsidiary convention at an end. If she had such a right, the period for the termination of the subsidiary convention arrived, I think, on the 13th of March last. It appears that she does consider herself at liberty to declare that convention at an end; but, as the news only came by the last mail, the noble lord will not expect from me a declaration of a positive opinion as to whether Brazil is justified in the course which she has thought proper to adopt. But whether she declares that convention at an end or not, she is bound by engagements of permanent operation. Brazil and this country have a convention, signed on the 23rd of November, 1826, which provides—"That three years after the exchange of the ratifications, it should not be lawful for the subjects of the Emperor of Brazil to be concerned in carrying on the African slave-trade under any pretext, or in any manner whatever; and that the carrying on of such trade after that period by any person, a subject of Brazil, should be deemed and treated as piracy."

This is an engagement which is at present in force. I abstain on the present occasion from expressing any opinion as to the ability of Brazil to declare at an end the convention which accords the appointment of a mixed commission. I have the satisfaction of knowing that there is that other convention, which cannot be terminated by any act of Brazil, remaining in force, which declares the carrying on of the slave-trade by a subject of Brazil to be an act of piracy; that is, not merely a law of Brazil, but an engagement with the government of this country, that such an act shall be considered an act of piracy. The noble lord has referred to the answer which I gave him on a former night, with respect to the operation of the treaty which was signed by five great powers of Europe, and which was ratified by four out of those five powers in 1840. I have only to state now what I stated then, that France having refused to ratify that treaty, it became a matter of serious consideration whether it were politic to exercise the power which those who had ratified it undoubtedly had under the treaty to invite the other maritime powers of Europe, not being parties to the treaty, to concur in the obligations of it. I will not on this occasion enter into the circumstances which induced France to refuse her ratification. The House will be aware what were the political circumstances, unconnected with any question of the slave-trade, which induced her to adopt such a course. The noble lord cannot be ignorant of the circumstances, connected, as they notoriously were, with the transactions which took place in the summer of 1840, with the Syrian cam-

paign, and with the termination of that friendly alliance which previously existed between France and this country. I forbear to enter into the consideration of these circumstances. I forbear to discuss now who was the party, or with whom rests the blame of that termination. There cannot be a doubt, however, that political considerations connected with the treaty of July, 1840, and the proceedings adopted by this country in reference to the Syrian campaign, were the real cause why France declined to ratify the treaty. The noble lord makes us responsible for the delay with respect to the signature. I assure the noble lord that we are perfectly free from any such blame. We succeeded to power in August or September, 1841, and it was not through any negligence on our part that the signature of France was not attached to the treaty. Circumstances occurred in the chambers which prevented the ratification. If the noble lord thought we laboured to obstruct the ratification of the treaty, why did he not at the time make some motion calling the attention of the House to the circumstances. The noble lord says we made no remonstrance. We did every thing we could to impress on France the duty which she owed to the cause of humanity, to ratify, by her signature, the treaty to which she had been a party. The question is, whether we were entitled to insist on its ratification? We certainly thought we were not, either by past usage or any thing in the law of nations; and, not being entitled, it became, of course, a question in what manner we should direct any remonstrance against the act of a country which had thought fit to exercise a power to which we thought her entitled to resort. But, as to our passiveness and indifference, and our acquiescence in the refusal of France to ratify the treaty, the noble lord labours under a most erroneous impression. The government of France did refuse to ratify the treaty; it became the subject of eager debate in a popular assembly; and that assembly prevented the executive government, which was well inclined to the treaty, from ratifying it. Placing a remonstrance against it, and exercising that power which popular assemblies will occasionally exercise, they induced that government to decline to ratify the treaty which had been signed. France not having ratified the treaty, it became a question for our consideration whether it would be politic to invite the three powers contemplated by the treaty—namely, Belgium, Hanover, and Greece, to concur in its engagements; the Slave-trade, in point of fact, being carried on on the coast of Africa by none of these powers, their flag never having been used to cover the traffic. I do not deny the advantage in point of moral impression of procuring their sanction to a reciprocal right of search; I think it of advantage that all the powers of Europe should concur, even when the flags of those powers may not be used for carrying on the trade; I do not deny that a general protest against the Slave-trade would be of great public advantage. But we had to consider what would be the most desirable immediate practical course. It became a question, after the refusal of France to ratify the treaty, whether or not a greater probability of advantage presented itself in an appeal to those powers. We had to set against the advantages of that moral impression the disadvantages of the possible refusal on the other part to concur in our demand; and it was thought at the time inexpedient, after the example set by France, to call on Belgium, Hanover, and Greece, to concur in the engagements of the treaty.— But the noble lord says, he always foresaw, after the example set by France, that great difficulty would be found in procuring the assent of these powers; and that he was very much afraid that the refusal of France to ratify the treaty, would not be confined to France. The noble lord thinks that that part of the treaty which enabled the concurring powers to call on Belgium, Hanover, and Greece, to acquiesce in its provisions, might be nullified by the refusal of France to ratify. Such was the noble lord's impression, and he can, therefore, well estimate the motives of those who, after such refusal, thought it inexpedient to address themselves to those powers. I am not prepared to say, that Hanover would not have acquiesced. The noble lord says, "Why not appeal to Hanover?" But if Hanover had consented, and Belgium had declined, I still must think the advantage gained on one side would have been more than counterbalanced by the disadvantages of the other. The noble lord has referred to the treaty with Brazil. The noble lord says, "You have done nothing yourselves, and you have undone what others had done." It is very easy for the noble lord to make these charges; but I will refer to the Slave-trade papers, already presented to the House, and to those which will be shortly presented; in those will

be found the best evidence whether the present government have been indifferent to the suppression of this infamous traffic. The noble lord says, we have not even gained what was intended by the treaty of Ghent, and talks about the eighty guns sent by the United States to the coast of Africa, to suppress the Slave-trade. What did the noble lord gain under the treaty of Ghent? Did he get one gun sent by the United States to the African coast? I must assert, that we have procured a more active co-operation on the part of the United States for the suppression of the Slave-trade than the noble lord was able to obtain, during his whole tenure of power, under that treaty. The noble lord talks of the unjust stipulations of the treaty of Washington, which he again designates "a capitulation," when the very latest intelligence from the United States tells us, that in that country they are applying to their own government precisely the same terms. I assure the noble lord that there are Palmerstons in the congress of the United States who charge their government with having made a capitulation, and state, that if certain documents had been produced two or three months ago, it would have been impossible for the convention to have been signed. Therefore, I hope the noble lord will no longer persist in so describing the agreement made by my noble friend, which received the cordial sanction of the House, who, I hope, will not take the character of that most difficult, and, as I think, successful negotiation from the noble lord, who is evidently more mortified by that than by any other act of his successors, especially when the House recollects that my noble friend, Lord Ashburton, had not only to effect that arrangement with the general government of the United States, but that two of the states of that great country, Maine and Massachusetts, had the power, by withholding their assent, to interpose difficulties which it would have been almost impossible to overcome. Bearing this in mind, I cannot think that the great majority of this House will lightly estimate the wisdom and perseverance of my noble friend, which led to the termination of differences which then threatened the continuance of amicable relations between the United States and this country. I should like to know what we lost by the arrangement. I should like to know whether or not, by removing the risk, which was then imminent, of an immediate hostile collision with the United States, the arrangement made by Lord Ashburton involved a sacrifice, on the part of this country, of her honour, or of any thing permanent or valuable. But there was under that treaty of Washington a power on the part of this country and the United States to make, jointly, representations to other powers carrying on the Slave-trade. I stated to the noble lord, that the mode of carrying into execution that engagement had been the subject of conference between my noble friend, Lord Aberdeen, and Mr. Everett, the American minister, immediately after the signature of the treaty. I believe the impression of Mr. Webster and Lord Ashburton, at the time of concluding the treaty, was, that the representations to be made were not to be representations simultaneously and jointly made. The question was considered whether or not we were more likely to operate successfully by uniting in our representations to Brazil or to Spain, those representations being jointly made in the common name of the two countries; or whether we should not better secure our object by leaving each country to take its own course, urging its representations in the way each might think best. The noble lord says we wished to spare the feelings of Brazil; but that was not our object. We wished to consider the mode by which we were most likely to effect the object contemplated, namely, to impede and annihilate the Slave-trade. If the noble lord will look at the representations we made to Brazil, he will see that there was no desire on our part to spare the feelings of either Spain or Brazil—he will see the terms in which we address our remonstrance to both these countries. All that will appear in the Slave-trade papers; and then all parties will be competent to judge whether there has been any desire to consult the feelings of parties who have been carrying on the Slave-trade in defiance of the existing treaties. Sir, I believe also that the United States were actuated and influenced by no desire to consult the delicate feelings of Brazil. What I stated was this—that the two countries feared if their representations were made conjointly, they would be less effectual in inducing Brazil to observe these treaties, than if they were made separately. I think if the noble lord will refer to the representations of our minister, and his denunciations of this traffic, his bringing under the notice of the Brazilian authorities their constant infraction of the treaty, and the constant



connivance of the subordinate authorities at the infraction of the treaty, the noble lord will see that this country has shown no disposition, but, on the contrary, has used the strongest language, and taken those steps which were best calculated to enforce on the Brazilian government the moral and political duties which should induce it to adhere to these treaties. Sir, these were the considerations that induced my noble friend and the minister of the United States to abstain from making, in the first place, a joint representation from the two countries. I believe I have replied to the principal observations of the noble lord. He admits, that with respect to the emancipados, every representation that could be made has been made, so far as may be judged from the papers. The noble lord spoke of the representations that had been made to Spain for the appointment of a mixed commission in Cuba to put down the Slave-trade. I am surprised the noble lord should impute to the present government any indifference to the continuance of the Slave-trade. The noble lord did make that representation; but at the time he did make it, I think he could not have expected that if that representation did not produce a moral effect in Spain, he had any legal power to enforce it. It might have been wise to do every thing in our power to induce them to observe the obligations of the treaty; but we were advised, in case Spain refused to appoint that mixed commission, that we had no power by any engagements entered into, or by the general law of nations, to compel them to appoint the commission. I am certainly surprised to hear the noble lord say that he differed from that opinion, which was enunciated by very high legal authority. I quite agree with him in the desire he has expressed to see the suppression of the Slave-trade; but where I differ from him is, that I do not believe that any assumption of authority by this country, which is not warranted by engagements, or by the law of nations, is the most effectual course that might be adopted for the suppression of the Slave-trade. We should make every effort, consistent either with actual engagements or the law of nations, to compel those countries which have engagements with us to observe those engagements; to induce other powers which have not engagements—to induce them by persuasion, and by every motive which can influence them, to concur with us in a strong effort for the suppression of that trade. Sir, this has been our course; but the noble lord advises, without reference to engagements, that we should assert our right to compel other powers to suppress the Slave-trade. On that point I differ from him; and I doubt whether our difficulties, instead of being diminished, would not be increased, if we were to place ourselves decidedly in the wrong, even in enforcing the admitted rights of humanity. Sir, when these papers are laid on the table, the House will be able to judge whether the government is justly liable to the charge which the noble lord has advanced on various former occasions, and again repeated to-night. If they could be substantiated—if it could be shown that we are indifferent to the suppression of this monstrous evil, so degrading to civilized nations, I should deeply regret that ministers had laid themselves open to just censure; and in such a case no condemnation could hardly be too severe to inflict on the government of a country which has made such sacrifices for the suppression, not only of the Slave-trade, but for the abolition of slavery.

The House then went into committee, several votes were agreed to, and the House resumed.

### MAYNOOTH COLLEGE.

MAY 21, 1845.

In the third night's debate on the question that the Maynooth College bill be read a third time—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said,—I admit, Mr. Speaker, the reasonableness of the demand which the House appears so evidently to make for an immediate division on this subject, considering the length of time during which it has now been pressed upon the attention of the House. I am not accordingly about to enter into a detailed discussion of the question, the merits of which have now been altogether exhausted. I have myself besides had the opportunity, during the course of the discussion, of repeatedly addressing the House, and I have now nothing to add to the statements which I have already made, as to the motives and grounds on which her Majesty's

government have introduced this bill. I am unwilling, however, because I fear that misconstruction might be put upon my silence, to permit the debate to close without making a few observations. I must allude to some portions of one or two able speeches which have been made during the debate in opposition to the measure—one made by my hon. friend the member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Bankes), and another by the hon. member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Colquhoun). The hon. member for Dorsetshire alleged that I had very incorrectly stated to the House the history of the original endowment of Maynooth, and said that he would prove from contemporary history that my account of the origin of that institution was incorrect. Sir, the history to which my hon. friend referred was a pamphlet written by Dr. Duigenan. That pamphlet I hold in my hand. I have read it, and I cannot find one word in that pamphlet which justifies the observations of my hon. friend. I find nothing in it whatever, which is in the slightest degree inconsistent with what I have stated; but I do find much in it which is in complete corroboration of all that I have advanced. I find in it the most complete proof that his Majesty, at that time, attached the utmost importance to the establishment of this institution. I find proof that they contended with great difficulties; and I find proof that they thought it of the utmost importance to the peace and welfare of Ireland, at the critical periods to which this pamphlet refers—the year '95—one year before the invasion of Ireland by the French; and the year '99, one year after the suppression of the rebellion in Ireland. I find decided proof that the Irish government, responsible then for the tranquillity of Ireland, attached the utmost importance to the establishment and preservation of Maynooth College. But I also find in the pamphlet a statement to which my hon. friend referred, and which, if it were founded on truth, might answer well the purpose of his argument. I do find there statements made which, if they are correct, would implicate Maynooth, the professors of Maynooth, and the president of Maynooth, in the serious charge of affording countenance and encouragement to the Irish rebellion. It is stated in this pamphlet by Dr. Duigenan, that thirty-six Romish students from this monastery had, on the breaking out of the rebellion, joined the insurgents, and fought at Kilcock against the King's troops; that certainly sixteen or seventeen students had been expelled because of the rebellion; but the governors waited with becoming prudence till the rebellion was suppressed before they executed this act of wholesome severity. If that statement was correct, revived as it has been by my hon. friend, it is calculated to create a most unfavourable impression with respect to Maynooth and those immediately connected with it. But what are the real facts of the case, and how do they bear out the accuracy of the statement thus made? It is stated that the heads of the college of Maynooth waited with becoming prudence until the rebellion was suppressed before they expelled any of the students. Sir, the rebellion broke out on the 23rd of May, 1798. What was the course which the trustees of the institution took? They were Roman Catholics, and the statement which I am about to read is similar to one which was made to-night by another Roman Catholic, the right hon. member for Dungarvon. It is an extract from the journal of proceedings of the trustees of the Roman Catholic seminary at Maynooth:—"Friday, the 11th of May, 1798—present, Lord Fingal, in the chair; Lord Gormanston, Dr. O'Reilly, Dr. Moylan, Dr. French, Lord Kenmare, Dr. Troy, Dr. Plunkett, and Dr. Cruise."

The rebellion did not break out until the 23rd of May; this meeting was held upon the 13th, ten days previous; it is evident, therefore, that so far "from waiting with becoming prudence before they interfered, until the rebellion was suppressed," that they had interfered ten days before it took place, upon which occasion the trustees came to this resolution:—"The trustees, considering with grief the unhappy system of political delirium which, after having marked its progress through some of the most cultivated parts of Christendom, by the destruction of order, morality, and religion, appears to have made such strides in this kingdom as menace ruin to every thing we should venerate and esteem as Christians and as men, and deeply sensible of the perfect opposition between every part of such pernicious system, and the beneficent objects of the institution over which they preside, think it expedient to order that the president be directed to maintain the most vigilant inspection over the conduct of every individual admitted in any manner to a participation of

the benefits of the college; that he be empowered, and he is hereby empowered, to punish by expulsion such person or persons as may by their actions or discourse abet or support any doctrines tending to subvert a due regard to the established authorities; and that the scholars and students be admonished that on those topics, and in these critical times, a conduct not only free from crime, but even from suspicion, ought to be expected from their gratitude, their attested allegiance, and sacred professional destination."

This they did for the purpose of marking their utter condemnation of any thing like seditious or improper conduct on the part of those placed under their supervision. What was the course practically taken? They directed a notice upon the subject to be given to the president of the college. Here is the memorandum of it:—"The above instruction was sent immediately to the president, who, after a solemn investigation, expelled every individual in the seminary who appeared to have formed any engagement whatever with the society of United Irishmen, although they all expressed the greatest sorrow, and took the oath of allegiance after the said investigation."

And yet, notwithstanding the expressions of their regret, and their taking the oath of allegiance, those trustees, "not waiting with cautious prudence until the rebellion was suppressed," but ten days before it broke out, expelled every individual who was in any way implicated in it. Does not that prove that too much confidence was not to be placed in that contemporary history to which our attention has been drawn? We talk likely now of withdrawing this vote from Maynooth; it was desired to withdraw it in 1799 and in 1800, as mentioned in this pamphlet. The House of Lords in Ireland did absolutely reject the bill which had been sent from the House of Commons containing some modifications of the institution, and proposing the continuance of the grant. Lord Cornwallis was then Lord-lieutenant for Ireland, and the day after the rejection of the bill he wrote to them, on the 17th of April, 1799, saying—"I am sorry to say that a very different construction was put upon the proceedings of the House of Lords, and there was not a person amongst those whom I saw on Tuesday morning who did not conceive that this institution of Maynooth was entirely done away; and many of them were so blinded by their Protestant zeal as to exult exceedingly in the justice of the punishment which they conceived to be thereby inflicted on the Catholics for their late offences. When that opinion universally prevails at Dublin, there can be no doubt that the emissaries of faction, as well as of treason, will be very active in conveying it to every corner of the kingdom, and that it will most powerfully tend to inflame the minds of the Catholics of all orders against the government, on the evil consequences of which it is, I am sure, unnecessary for me to expatiate."

Lord Castlereagh was then Secretary for Ireland. He went down to the House of Commons the very next day, and declared that, notwithstanding the rejection of the bill by the House of Lords, it was the determination of the Irish government to prove to the Roman Catholics that they did not mean to abandon the institution. It was not on account of money that they came to that determination; but what the government of Lord Cornwallis and Lord Castlereagh feared was, that the abandoning of the vote, and the institution having been established four years previously, would have been looked upon by the Catholics then, as I think it would be looked upon by them now, as an indication of a hostile spirit towards them. Another bill was passed—the act of 1800—and was afterwards adopted by the English parliament; and it is not on account of the temporary continuance of the vote that I ever argued that a pledge of parliament was implied, but on account of the acts of parliament directly sanctioning the institution, and providing for it that superintendence which, on the part of the state, was giving to it support, encouragement, and sanction. The only other speech which I desire to notice is that made to-night by the hon. member for Newcastle-under-Lyme. During the progress of that speech, able and powerful as it was, I must own that the impressions entertained by my noble friend, and that have been so well and so eloquently expressed by him, were precisely the self-same impressions that it left on my mind. I will take the account of Ireland as he has given it, as being that of an active opponent of this measure. In Ireland then, for the last five or six years, this has been the state of affairs. There has been, he affirms, no free expression of public opinion on the

part of the Protestants. That if you attempt to make proselytes to Protestantism, a man cannot live in safety or peace in Ireland—that a man's life is in danger if he exercises the privileges of a British subject, and seeks to express his own opinions. The hon. gentleman says, we cannot give to the landed proprietors in Ireland protection from violence and outrage. The hon. gentleman says, that in Ireland it frequently happens that priests, and priests too educated in Maynooth, denounce from the altar parties who have exposed themselves to their rebuke, and that these parties have been afterwards visited with severe punishment; and the hon. gentleman proves that this is done in Ireland, and that it has become a common and frequent practice. However, the hon. gentleman says, that there are 3,000 priests spread over the face of Ireland, and every one, and all of these, without exception, are active agents and instruments in favour of repeal. Be it so. Granted that this is a correct account of the state of Ireland. Then I ask the hon. gentleman, what is the remedy he proposes? The hon. gentleman himself, I believe, is not an advocate for the withdrawal of the grant from Maynooth; because, when the proposal was made on former occasions, he was decidedly opposed to it. [Mr. Colquhoun: No.] I speak from memory; but I thought that the hon. gentleman said, that the acts of parliament had thrown around Maynooth so decisive and authoritative a sanction, that it would be impossible to withdraw the vote until we get rid of the acts of parliament. [Mr. Colquhoun nodded assent.] I think, too, that the hon. gentleman did not advise the continuance of the vote, and the exacting from the professors of Maynooth a submission to active superintendence. I wish then to ask the hon. gentleman what he proposes as a remedy for the state of affairs which he has described as existing in Ireland? He admits that we have done every thing which the law would enable us to do, for the purpose of giving protection to life and property; and yet, he says, that we have not the power to give protection. It cannot be said of us, that we have neglected any precaution that it was in our power to take. During the prevalence of the danger in the year 1843, there were not less than 30,000 soldiers in Ireland. We had there a police force of not less than 10,000 men. We had, too, a naval force on the coast. We were determined, as far as the law would enable us, and the power of the executive could be exercised, that every thing should be done for the maintenance of the public peace. The hon. gentleman says, that we succeeded so far that agitation was, in a great measure, suppressed—that we had proved the supremacy of the laws—that we had proved our determination not to submit to intimidation—that the repeal rent abated—that the influence of the repeal leaders was much reduced—and that that was precisely the moment that was selected for intimating our intention of making an alteration with respect to the grant for Maynooth. I believe that was the proper moment for making such a proposition; and yet the hon. gentleman's inference is, from all that he had thus stated, that we acted most unwisely in taking advantage of that opportunity to propose remedial measures. Sir, it appears to me that it was precisely the very moment for introducing this remedial measure. We had done every thing that it became an executive to achieve. We had proved our determination to resist any forcible attempt to sever the connection between the two countries. It was not then inconsistent with the honour of the executive government maturely to consider whether any other measures besides those of force could be regarded as a remedy for the existing state of Ireland. The hon. gentleman says, enforce the law—protect property—suppress the present alarming excitement—and punish those denunciations from the altars. What is the meaning of these words, "enforce the law?" Sir, the only instrument for enforcing the law is an appeal to trial by jury. While that tribunal is not interfered with—while it exists, it is the only means by which you can enforce the law. Well, then, I do say that the enforcement of the law was incompatible with the state of things in Ireland, even after the agitation had been suppressed in 1843—that trial by jury is an instrument not available for the vindication of the law in a country where the great mass of the population is hostile to the government—that the vigorous enforcement of the law was hardly applicable to the state of Ireland even after agitation had been suppressed. We came then to the consideration of remedial measures. My hon. friend says, that he does not think that I have been quite aware of all the consequences of these proceedings, and he hopes that I have been mistaken. I assure him that we have adopted this

course with a perfect foresight of all the consequences that might arise. I assure my hon. friend that I deeply regret the severance from political friends, who honestly and sincerely disapprove of the course we have pursued. He considers that we have lost their confidence. I deeply regret it; but, regretting it, I must still claim for the executive government, charged with duties of the highest importance to the sovereign and the country, responsible for the consequences of their acts, I must, I say, claim for them the absolute right, without reference to the past, and without too much regard to what party considerations must claim from them, to risk even the loss of confidence of their friends, rather than abstain from doing that which conviction tells them the present circumstances require. It is not, Sir, my desire to notice the expressions made use of by the hon. member for Knaresborough. It seems to me that a misapprehension is entertained in some quarters with respect to the position of a minister of the Crown. I am as proud of the confidence as any man can be, which a great party has placed in me; still I never can admit that he owes any personal obligation to those members who have placed him in a certain position. And I should consider it as the happiest day in my life when I was permitted to act merely as an individual member of parliament, unconnected even with party, rather than continue to hold office by the servile tenure of the advice I gave to my sovereign upon every subject, being exactly in conformity with every opinion which every member of that party might hold. Sir, it would be difficult, indeed, for any government to administer public affairs on such a principle; for, while I was trying to conciliate the hon. member for Knaresborough, I should be forfeiting the confidence of my noble friend near me (Lord F. Egerton). But, without reference to what may be the opinion of that man or this, I claim for myself the right to give to my sovereign, at any time, that advice which I believe the interests of the country require. I have not on this occasion, nor have my right hon. friends, acted without deep consideration, and without feeling most severely the loss of the support, the permanent loss, perhaps, of the confidence of those who, it has been said, have placed us in power. I have been charged with having exhibited an indifference to public opinion on this question, and a disposition to disregard it; but for that public opinion, believing it to be influenced in the main by religious considerations, I have the highest respect; but I retain the determination I have before stated, and now repeat, that so far from that expression of public opinion inducing me to abandon, or causing me to waver in my course, I deliberately repeat, that with every respect for that public opinion, there are high political considerations which induce me to adhere to the course we have adopted. If I thought the opposition which has been raised to this bill were now to prevail—if I thought the principle on which the opposition was founded were to triumph, I should despair for the maintenance of amicable relations between Great Britain and Ireland. I think, therefore, it is of peculiar importance, for the purpose of mitigating the evil which would arise from the success of that opposition—I think it is of the utmost importance, that public men should show to the people of Ireland that they will not lightly abandon the course they have entered upon for their benefit, and that they are content to make any sacrifice, now and for ever, in the maintenance of the opinions which they have permanently placed on record. I think the misfortune of failure would be great; and it is too late now to inquire whether the grant should be withdrawn. I am convinced, notwithstanding all that has passed—I remained satisfied of the policy of the course we have pursued; and I do not think it would be wise, if that be the character of the priesthood which has been stated, to continue this implied sanction to Maynooth—to permit this act of parliament to remain on record—to take the superintendence of the College, and by the sanction of the Lord-lieutenant and the official visitors, to be connected with the institution, and yet to hold out that miserable pittance, which induces indignation rather than gratitude in the minds of the priesthood. We have proposed a liberal endowment for Maynooth, and that proposition has been received in Ireland with as much of approbation and gratitude as I expected for it. I have never heard any objection to the grant on the part of the Roman Catholics; but, on the contrary, I have found on the part of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the professors of Maynooth, and the Roman Catholic priesthood of Ireland generally, so far as I have been able to collect their opinions, that they are disposed gratefully to accept the proffered boon. I must say, that this exhibi-

tion of kindly feeling on the part of the British parliament has produced in Ireland all those good effects which I expected from it. One hon. member has read a letter from the Rev. Dr. Higgins, and another has referred to a letter from the Rev. Dr. M'Hale, condemning the bill; while another hon. gentleman, my hon. friend the member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, has quoted a paragraph from a French newspaper, which he says speaks with the authority of the government, as a proof that we are wrong. Now, with all respect for my hon. friend, I think we can scarcely look at the condemnation of a French newspaper as a proof that we are taking a wrong course in this matter. It was hardly to be expected that the agitation which has been so long going on would cease at once; but by creating a feeling of gratitude and good feeling in the minds of the people, we say we are cutting up the trade of agitation, and we must expect ere long that the agitation will be put an end to altogether. I do not take it for granted that the angry speeches we hear of as being made in Conciliation Hall afford any indication of the feeling of the people generally. You suppose that the whole Protestant feeling of Ireland is represented by a small section in the north; and the whole Roman Catholic feeling, you imagine, is represented by the speeches in Conciliation Hall. No opinion can be more erroneous. There is a great mass—a large intermediate mass of both Catholic and Protestant feeling in Ireland, which is not represented by the proceedings in the north of Ireland, or the speeches in Conciliation Hall, and is in no way influenced by them. I believe the course the government have taken has greatly diminished the influence of agitation in Ireland generally, and has conciliated—I will not say the confidence of the people towards the government; but, at all events, it has diminished the desire of the great body of the Roman Catholics of Ireland to connect themselves with turbulence and agitation. I look to the Irish members of this House—to the Roman Catholic members of this House, as the great representatives of the Roman Catholic opinions in Ireland, rather than to any less authentic or less foreign source; and I must say, the Roman Catholic members have acted most fairly in the support they have given to the proposal of the government. Before I conclude, I must take the opportunity of expressing my deep sense of the honourable and disinterested motives upon which the great body of those gentlemen who are opposed to me in political life have acted in support of the government. It would not be becoming in me to offer—nor would it be becoming in them to accept—any expression of personal acknowledgment; for I know, in so supporting us, they have only acted in accordance with their sense of public duty, and their convictions of what is most conducive to the interests of the country, and that these have been alone the motives by which they have been actuated. I know, in proposing and adhering to this measure—I know what may be the consequence, in alienating from me men with whom I have long acted, and whom I respect; while, on the other hand, I can claim no compensation in any demand upon the gratitude of those gentlemen connected with Ireland to whom I have always been politically opposed. I am bound to admit that their continued gratitude is due, not to me, but rather to those who have been their constant and uniform supporters through a long course of political years. From them, therefore, I can claim no gratitude. We have acted, in regard to this measure, wholly on our sense of duty, and that is our only merit; and in acting upon that sense of duty we have been prepared to incur, and are prepared to incur, whatever risk may attend us; but our consolation and our compensation would be complete if the result of our measures be—if not to conciliate the support of our opponents—to engender a kindly feeling between Ireland and Great Britain, and increase the chances of maintaining a perfectly amicable connection and relation between those two parts of this great empire.

Bill read a third time.

## ACADEMICAL INSTITUTIONS (IRELAND.)

MAY 30, 1845.

The order of the day was read for the second reading of the Academical Institutions (Ireland) bill. Towards the close of the debate which ensued—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows: Sir, I certainly thought, until I heard the

speech of my hon. friend the member for Somerset (Mr. Acland), that whatever difference of opinion may prevail upon the details of this measure, there had been a general concurrence in one sentiment—that if we could overcome the difficulties which arise from different religious creeds, an extension of academical education in Ireland would be a great advantage to that country. I understand from my hon. friend, that that part of the case has been left wholly imperfect, that the benefit remains not yet established, and that he very much doubts whether there is that necessity, or that any great advantage will be derived, which is alleged on behalf of the institution of academical institutions in Ireland. Sir, I assume now that we can overcome the difficulties in respect to religious differences; and I should have thought there would have been a general concurrence in this, that looking at the state of Ireland, the extent of its population, the ample provision of academical instruction made in this part of the United Kingdom, its gradual extension in Oxford, Cambridge, University College, King's College, Durham—all proceeding upon the recognition of this principle, that academical institutions do conduce to the cause of sound learning and social improvement—looking again at Scotland, and seeing there a limited population, and not less than four or five academical institutions, dispensing advantages to the inhabitants of that country, and even of Ireland, some of whom are forced to resort thither; looking at these things, I should have thought we might take it for granted, that sound academical institutions would be an advantage to Ireland. According to the last return its population was upwards of 8,000,000; it is now I believe nearly, if not quite, 9,000,000. I look, then, to the provision already made for education in Ireland. Maynooth gives no advantage to the laity; Dublin College provides education for about 100 or 120 Roman Catholics; and in the Belfast Academical Institution there may be twelve or fourteen Catholics. Now, I look at the population of Ireland—at the number of the Catholics in Leinster, Munster, and Connaught; and I ask whether the necessity for academical education is not sufficiently established by adverting to the facts, without adding any argument? But, if you want further proof, what have we done for the education of children there? We are now educating 400,000 in the national schools alone; we are giving them, I believe, an excellent education: it continues till they are of the age of twelve or fourteen—a most important period of life, when they are hardly qualified to be sent into the world, yet the superintendence over their education ceases then; and only the imperfect provision I have adverted to is made for academical training. The parents send them to Scotland. Will you not try, if possible, to provide in their own country the means of academical education? I hold in my hand a work familiar to all connected with Ireland—one of the best and ablest, because one of the most practical works I have ever seen, connected with the improvement of Ireland—the work of a very eminent man—Dr. Kane, a Roman Catholic. I heard with surprise and regret that professors of geology must be distrusted, if the youth they educate are of a different religious creed from themselves; that is not our doctrine. We have recently established a geological department; we want to make that science subservient to the improvement of agriculture, and the advance of manufactures. We looked for a man to whom we could entrust that department, and we have had no such doubts: we have not thought Dr. Kane disqualified from giving lectures on geology because he is a Roman Catholic; and the gentleman we have selected within the last two months to preside over this new department of knowledge, to instruct the people of Ireland in the means of improving and developing the great resources of that country, and to give these lectures to the whole people of Ireland without exception, is this Roman Catholic gentleman; and I venture to say he will not pervert the powers we have given him to undermine the faith of any of his scholars. Now, what is the opinion of Dr. Kane, after having written fully and ably on the industrial resources of Ireland? He gives his general opinion with respect to the improvement of that country in his concluding chapter; and he says—“The extent and quality of our supplies of fuel, the distribution and amount of our sources of water-power, the locality of our mines of copper and other useful metals, have engaged attention, as well as the condition of the soil, the amount of its produce, and the general principles upon which its cultivation will remunerate. With such elements of prosperity lying at our hands, it becomes a problem of high importance to resolve why they have not been made available, and why this country

has been left behind by other nations, whose natural circumstances are in few instances superior, but in many particulars certainly less advantageous."

The writer then proceeded to solve the problem, why, with all these advantages, Ireland was still backward in material comfort compared with the other European nations. It was, he said, an erroneous conception that her people were inferior, morally or physically, to those of any other country; and he deprecated the idea that it was the want of capital—English capital—adding interjectionally that English capital was the bugbear of Irish prosperity. The real cause, he argued, of the backwardness of Ireland was the want of industrial knowledge among her inhabitants. England had no more capital than Ireland before her industrial knowledge was developed; and in Ireland, as well as it had done in that country, capital would follow the application of science to the development of the natural and material resources of Ireland. And he concluded by laying it down, as an indisputable position, that collegiate establishments, which would give to men of all creeds the aid of professors of science, were the best if not the only means of effecting that most desirable object. That was written before collegiate establishments were spoken of in this House. That is my answer to my hon. friend the member for Somerset, when he tells me that it is yet to be proved that there is any social advantage in extending the means of academical education in Ireland. I think a large majority of this House will admit that it is a great end to be attained, considering the want of education among the youths advanced beyond the age of childhood; and that it is an object not lightly to be abandoned. But, surely, this also will be admitted, that that education ought, if possible, to be given in common. We should be counter-acting the object for which we founded the national system of education, where the youths are educated in common, if, after having made those acquaintances in early life, and formed that bond of connexion which united education establishes, we were to interrupt it just when they are on the threshold of life, and say to them, "You who were educated together in schools, must now no longer be educated together." But if I am to plant new academical institutions here and there throughout Ireland, making each of them of an exclusive character, with professors of their own faith, of course I shall have an exclusive and separate education in each, and I must forego the advantages I hope to gain. I should relinquish, with the deepest regret, the prospect of having education in common for the Protestant, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic youth of Ireland. I wish, then, to establish first the policy of having academical institutions in Ireland on a more extensive scale, and next to have the means of educating there together the youth of Ireland. Now, how can this be done without, at the same time, disregarding that which I admit, at the outset, to be of the utmost importance—the imparting to them a sound religious training, according to their principles? I say at once, that I found and justify a departure from that solely on the peculiar circumstances of Ireland. I admit at once, that I think the system we propose inapplicable to England and Scotland; but, if we are to have academical institutions in Ireland, I see no other mode of securing that advantage but by the establishment of some such system as this. I justify it by the peculiar and unfortunate character of the religious differences which there exist. What, then, is the proposal we make? That the state should afford the means of excellent secular instruction; that we should have professors of high character, moral and scientific, giving excellent secular education to the youth of Ireland. Do I so disregard religion? Do I so relegate religion from these Colleges? Do I undervalue the importance of connecting education, for the Roman Catholic as well as the Protestant youth, with religious instruction? Far from it. I think it would be imperfect if there were such a disconnection. I concur with the noble lord (Lord J. Russell), that if I can have nothing but improved secular instruction, I would rather have that than ignorance; but certainly I should feel that pure secular instruction, without any provision for religious instruction, was but a partial and imperfect training. What course then shall we take? Shall we endow theological professors in each of these institutions? If we do, it is quite clear that the Established Church will have an equal claim with the Roman Catholics, to have their professors of divinity and metaphysics endowed; and how could we reject the claim? Now, first of all, I will address myself to those on this side of the House who oppose the measure. Suppose we had taken that course—would it have been palatable to them?



Would my hon. friend the member for Oxford, who calls this "a gigantic scheme of godless education," have supported that plan of extending religious education for Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Presbyterian youth? My hon. friend would have said—"This is a covert mode of providing endowment for the Roman Catholic Church. You have no such reason as you had at Maynooth; there is no grant existing for fifty years; here is a novel endowment of a Roman Catholic professor. I charge you not only with making a provision for the Roman Catholic Church, but with an utter and manifest indifference to all religions; for, whether they be Roman Catholics, or Presbyterians, or members of the Established Church, here they have their professors of metaphysics, and moral philosophy, and divinity, and all are put upon a footing." My hon. friend smiles complacently; and I am sure, with that fairness and candour which attract for him the respect of all, he will admit that I have stated what would have been his speech. What would my hon. friend the member for Birmingham (Mr. Spooner) have said? "What! found a professor for the propagation of 'that awful delusion,' which you dignify with the name of religion?" Should I not have been met on this side of the House with the most decided opposition, partaking of the character of that which was offered to the institution of Maynooth, but supported by many arguments which could not there be alleged? Now, I turn to the Roman Catholics, and I very much doubt whether that arrangement would have been satisfactory to them. I can quite understand their acquiescing in the youth receiving education from a professor of mathematics, or of any abstract science, provided by the government; but if the government founded and endowed a professor of divinity, and especially if it subjected him to any sort of control, I question whether many of the Roman Catholic body would have connected themselves with the institution. I doubt whether they would not have said—"Our religion is independent of the state; scientific knowledge we are willing to receive, education in common we approve, but we will not permit, even by endowment, any interference with a thing so sacred as the spiritual education of our own youth." But do I "endanger faith or morals," by inviting Roman Catholics and Protestants to make provision for the education of their youth? Now, observe what was the original proposal of the hon. gentleman; it was that the government should only partially contribute to the institution of these colleges; and that the counties, by their grand juries, should provide a liberal sum; and the aid of government be made dependent upon the voluntary contributions. Now, we have said—"We will be at the charge of establishing these institutions; we will construct the requisite buildings; we will provide liberal endowments for the scientific professors; we will not call upon the grand juries for local contributions; we will commute that demand for a demand upon the voluntary contributions of those who are mainly interested in the religious instruction of these youths, namely, their friends and parents." Even if we were to leave them to found the professorship of moral philosophy as well as of divinity, how small a charge would it be upon such a community, either the Roman Catholic or the Protestant! Do we banish religion from these institutions? No; but we invite the parents and friends to make provision for religious education, sanctioning and encouraging it, and affording means for it; and I have the strongest impression that that education will be more effectually given, by leaving it to the natural friends and protectors of the youth in a country so circumstanced, than if the government were to appoint a theological professor. Now, as to moral discipline, I attach the utmost importance to it. The hon. gentleman who spoke last says, that youth will be in peril for want of it; why should not their parents and guardians undertake it? How much more easy is it for them than for us? How is the religious and moral instruction of a boy at Harrow conducted? It is not done by the head master reading lectures to him, and establishing a minute scrutiny over him, but the parents fix upon a tutor of good character residing there, and commit the boy to his charge, and entrust him with parental authority and control over the youth. Why should not the same course be taken in these institutions? What is the course taken at the Liverpool and Bristol Institutions? I have the papers of those academical institutions before me. I see among the list of the professors the names of those who are willing to take boys under their private care; and there are clergymen and teachers, through whose supervision religious instruction may be

given to the scholars. Now, if you wish to have religious instruction given to the pupils in these academical institutions, provided it be done with the full consent of the natural guardians of the child, there is nothing in the bill to interfere with such an arrangement. I apprehend that parents will ascertain the character of the tutor, and place their children under his care, for the purpose of having their moral and religious improvement attended to; and that in this way, by a sort of common consent, the moral and religious instruction of the child will be attended to. I will suppose a town, with ten or twelve eminent professors, selected with the greatest care, giving lectures in that town, and setting an example of moral conduct; and that there are 300 or 400 pupils attached to the institution. Then am I to be seized with the utmost alarm with respect to the moral conduct of those youths? But if I look to the occupations of these youths on the banks of Loch Carrig—if I think what ought to be the real moral control which is to be exercised over them—if I see how they spend their week,—I must own that the alarm of introducing them to ten or twelve scientific men of high moral conduct, and the apprehension as to the consequence to the morals of these youths, are very much overrated. To show how far the predictions may be expected to be realized, in consequence of Roman Catholics or Protestants hearing scientific lectures from eminent professors of a different faith to their own, I will refer to an institution which was sanctioned by parliament in the year 1810—the Academical Institution at Belfast. In that year was passed, “An act to incorporate and regulate an institution, to be called the Belfast Academical Institution, for affording youth a classical and mercantile education.” It provided no religious test for the professors; it provided no religious instruction which the managers would not undertake to provide. I know that at a subsequent period difficulties arose in the management of the affairs of that institution; but that was because they were a proprietary body, and there was no control on the part of parliament over them. But on the point in question, I will call in the evidence of a witness than whom there can be none more unsuspected or impartial in such a case—the Roman Catholic Primate of Ireland, Dr. Crolly. This institution gave good secular education; but it went upon the principle of permitting the parents and guardians of youth to give their religious education as they pleased. Dr. Crolly was asked, “Have you been at Belfast for any length of time?” He answers, “Yes; I was parish priest there for nearly thirty years.” He is asked, “Whether he knew that any Roman Catholics attended the Belfast Academical Institution?” He says, “They did.” Now, the Belfast professors were mostly Presbyterians, who are more opposed to the faith and discipline of Roman Catholics than we of the Established Church. But I want to show you that the professors, instead of perverting the faith of those committed to their charge, and seeking to undermine their religious principles, were men of great scientific attainments, who viewed with kindness those placed under their care, and acted towards them with great delicacy. My hon. friend says, that we should try to enforce our doctrines upon others on all occasions. I differ from him; I would say to the professors, it is not your duty, considering your difference of religious creed, to seek opportunities of undermining the faith of those committed to your charge. That was the resolution to which these men came. Looking at the variety of creeds of those whom they had to instruct, they bound themselves by resolutions that they would not seek to convert them from the Roman Catholic faith. And what is the testimony of Archbishop Crolly, who now presides over the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland? I want to adduce facts to show you that we are better than you suppose us to be. Dr. Crolly is asked—“It is hardly necessary to inquire from you, whether there is any danger of the religious principles of Roman Catholics being interfered with in any way by their attendance at the Belfast Institution?” He says—“No; I do not think there is. Some Roman Catholic gentlemen sent their sons to this institution; and, though they were not of my parish or diocese, they were obliged to attend public worship in my parish.”

These observations lead me to think that the masters of these institutions directed the attention of their Roman Catholic pupils to their moral and religious duties; and that, so far from attempting to proselytize, they were honourable men, who felt that they had other business than that of undermining the faith of the Roman Ca-

tholic youth. Dr. Crolly is asked—"Have you ever heard complaints, that the attendance of Roman Catholics on the Institution was attended with any danger to their faith?" He replies—"Never. If I had, I should have interfered to prevent it; but I never apprehended, in the slightest degree, any thing of the sort."

He states that the religious instruction which the pupils received, was that derived by their attending at the explanation of the catechism and public worship in their own places. But, at the worst, a zealous Roman Catholic might say, "I will not permit these youths to be brought up in ignorance of religious truths. I will write to their parents on the subject; I will volunteer my services; I will see that the means of religious instruction are provided for them. But you will endow religious professorships; and have too much respect for, and too much confidence in, the importance that you attach to religion to believe that you will neglect a necessary provision of the kind. Dr. Crolly says—"I am personally acquainted with several of the professors." And he is asked—"Have any of those professors conducted themselves in any way offensive towards Roman Catholics?"

Now, here is the Roman Catholic testimony which is given in answer to that question—"No; quite the contrary. Some of the professors requested that I would revise some copies of the Roman Catholic scriptures for the use of the Roman Catholic pupils; and, though they are ministers of the Presbyterian Church, I believe they have paid proper and respectful attention to the religious principles of the Roman Catholic scholars."

Here, then, is Irish religious experience, and I place that in juxtaposition with your fears for the future. I believe that that which has happened in Belfast will happen again, if we are careful with respect to the selection of professors. These are facts in favour of communions of different sects, and united education. The difference between these proposed institutions and that of Belfast is, that in the latter there were theological professors endowed by the State, giving it a sectarian cast. Yet Dr. Crolly, in 1827, held an opinion in favour of the plan of Roman Catholic youths being educated there, the principle being recognised that each party should be religiously instructed according to the wish of his parents. I confess I was surprised, and seldom have I been more surprised, when I perused that public document recently set forth, wherein it is contended that a Roman Catholic pupil cannot receive instruction through lectures given by a professor of geology, or of anatomy, or of history, except he be a Roman Catholic professor. It is urged, I know, that it would be dangerous to their faith. Well, if that means that there is a tendency to infidelity in the study of geology, or of anatomy, or in the professors of them, I think that both Protestants and Roman Catholics stand upon the same footing in that respect. But, if I listen to a professor who lectures upon any science, does the difference of his faith from mine expose me to so much danger, that my exalted ideas of religion, and my well-grounded belief, are to be overturned by that association? I have a higher opinion of science. But will a man who is selected by the Crown for that important trust, a man eminent in his sphere, after he has developed to his pupil the mysterious mechanism of the human eye, or the wonderful and perpetual working of the human heart, end his description by which he enlarges the mind and expands the intellect of his pupil, with a weak attempt to disown the great Maker of all? Or, can you suppose that a professor will terminate an anatomical lecture with a sly sarcasm against Martin Luther, or a covert attack upon the Council of Trent? Such a thing is really ridiculous. I cannot conceive, that after an astronomical lecture a professor would take advantage of the power of his position, considering the conditions on which he accepts his office, for the purpose of undermining the faith and corrupting the morals of his scholars. Would a Roman Catholic, were a second Newton to arise, refuse to receive lectures in astronomy from such a man? Look at the magnificent conclusions he draws as to the omnipotence and omnipresence of the Deity. Can a man descend from such lofty sublimities to the paltry effort of corrupting the faith of some one of his listening pupils? It is not credible. Therefore I say, that the Roman Catholic and the Protestant have an equal guarantee against the propagation of infidelity in these institutions. But it is objected that these professors are to be exclusively in the nomination of the Crown. Why, that certainly is the case at present; for great care must necessarily be exercised at first

in their selection. It is also said there is no public trial. But if, hereafter, this should be found inexpedient, I do not know that it will be contrary to the principle of the bill to have a change in that respect. Let it not be supposed, however, that the utmost care will not be taken in selecting proper persons for those institutions, which are to be established in the Roman Catholic provinces of Munster and Connaught. I very much fear—notwithstanding all the pains that may be taken to secure men of distinguished reputation and of qualifications of the highest order—that the most eminent men, being those generally speaking who are the most advanced in life, will be the least inclined to come forward, and the most disposed to shun competition. Before I sit down, I should wish to mention one point which seems to me not to have been noticed by my right hon. friend—I mean exhibitions. It has been thought—and, as it appears to me, on very good ground—that they would greatly stimulate industry and promote sound learning. It has been, I regret to observe, made a matter of complaint, that those who have brought forward this measure have made no declaration as to the establishment of a university. Now I do think that, under present circumstances, it would be premature to make any declaration upon that subject. I think it is a question which ought to be left for mature deliberation; thus much, however, I may venture to say, that I think it would, on the whole, be better to form a university by the union of the three colleges, than to attempt to establish three by erecting each college into a university; considerations of this kind, however, will come time enough. If these colleges are found to work well—if they merit and obtain the confidence of the people of Ireland—we then can proceed to do whatever may be necessary with respect to a university, because some time hence will clearly be the fittest for its consideration: for those reasons we think it quite as well to make no declarations on this point. The Crown possesses the power of incorporating these colleges into a university whenever the necessity arises, and it can be done without the aid of parliament. It will then, I think, be admitted that this plan is extensive, though it does not embrace all that it might be possible to include. These, then, are the general principles upon which this measure has been submitted to the House. On the whole, we have thought that it was the best which we could at present produce; that, considering the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, we stood a better chance of success with a system in which religious education would be placed on the footing now proposed, than by attempting to form separate theological establishments, or by appointing separate theological professors in each college. My hon. friend the member for the university of Oxford, says that he will not support any but a system of education based upon religion; that he will support nothing without religious instruction. But I am sure my hon. friend will feel himself bound in candour to admit, that by religious instruction he must mean instruction according to the principles, doctrine, and discipline of the Church of England. That must be his plan—consistently with himself he could adopt no other; but for our parts, we should rather abandon the scheme altogether than attempt to establish in the south and west of Ireland colleges upon the principles of the Church of England. I know this plan of ours has been objected to by high authority in the Roman Catholic Church. I will add, however, that notwithstanding this, and notwithstanding some opposition on the part of the laity, there is every reason to believe, that amongst respectable and intelligent men of all classes there exists a strong disposition to accept this proposition. My belief is, that the national system can be carried out for the benefit of the Roman Catholic youth of Ireland. My belief is, that the effect of improved education will be to soften the asperities which arise in Ireland on account of religious differences—differences which greatly embitter social life in Ireland. In the words of a celebrated writer, I will say, that this plan is well calculated to lay a foundation for developing those natural and national resources with which that country abounds—to develop them not so much by the introduction of fresh capital into that country, as by that cultivation of industrial and scientific knowledge, combined with religious instruction, which it is the object of this bill to establish.

Bill read a second time, and the House adjourned.

## REPEAL OF THE CORN-LAWS.

JUNE 10, 1845.

Mr. Villiers having submitted his annual motion for the total abolition of the Corn-laws—

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, I have had so many opportunities of stating to the House my sentiments on this subject, that I feel reluctant again to express them; but, considering the great importance of the subject, and the position in which I stand, I am unwilling to give a silent vote upon the immediate question before the House. The hon. member for Wolverhampton has made on the present occasion a motion similar to that which he proposed last year; they are in substance precisely the same. The hon. gentleman last year made the following proposition:—"That this House do resolve itself into a committee, for the purpose of considering the following resolutions:—'That it appears, by a recent census, that the people of this country are rapidly increasing in number; That it is in evidence before this House, that a large proportion of her Majesty's subjects are insufficiently provided with the first necessities of life; That, nevertheless, a Corn-law is in force which restricts the supply of food, and thereby lessens its abundance; That any such restriction having for its object to impede the free purchase of an article upon which depends the subsistence of the community, is indefensible in principle, injurious in operation, and ought to be abolished; That it is, therefore, expedient that the Act 5 and 6 Victoria, c. 14, shall be repealed forthwith.'"

Now, I voted against the motion of the hon. gentleman last year; and I am not able to concur in his present motion. It is not my intention to deal out to the noble lord that measure of injustice which he has dealt to others. The noble lord was not enabled to support the motion of the hon. gentleman last year; but he is enabled to do so this year, though the proposal is identical with that of last year. I give the noble lord entire credit for integrity of motive. He shall not hear from me any taunt because upon this occasion he supports the same resolution which he could not support last year. But I think we must be fast approaching that period when the noble lord will not only give his support to the first two parts of the resolutions of the hon. gentleman, but cordially concur with the others. But when the noble lord says that the effect of the existing Corn-law is to increase the rents of the landlords, and advises them to consider what must be the invidious effect of that in the eyes of a scrutinizing and intelligent population, let me remind him that that objection applies with equal force to his own proposition. The hon. member for Stockport said, that whatever was the amount of a fixed duty, there was a corresponding increase in the value of every quarter of corn, the domestic produce of this country. Therefore, the hon. gentleman and the noble lord do not agree. The effect of his 4s. or 6s. duty is to make a corresponding increase of price in every quarter of corn sold and consumed in this country. The noble lord says, that is a greatly exaggerated estimate, and I agree with him as to the effect of a fixed duty; and I think the hon. member for Stockport has failed to establish that proposition against the noble lord. But though I vote against the motion of the hon. gentleman, I cannot concur in some of the arguments I have heard to-night on this side of the House in opposition to it. I must say, that I think experience has shown that a high price of corn is not necessarily accompanied with a high rate of wages. But I believe it would be impossible to show that the rate of wages varies with the price of corn; and speaking generally of the industrious classes of this country, I think it impossible to demonstrate that it is to their advantage that there should be permanently a high price of corn. I own I cannot concur with my hon. friend in speaking of the condition of the working classes, that whatever their condition might have been some few months ago, it is in some respects deteriorated, and that generally speaking the working classes at present are not in so comfortable a state as they were a few months ago. I should deeply regret it, if that were the case. I cannot speak of every district or parish. I know there are great vicissitudes of trade, and consequently of employment for them; but, speaking generally of the working classes, and particularly of the manufacturing classes, I do not believe that there is any deterioration in their condition as compared to that condition some few months ago. On the contrary, I do perceive in the in-

creased consumption of many articles—of coffee, of tea, of sugar, continued even up to the present time, an effective proof that their condition now as compared with their condition some two or three years ago is greatly improved; and I cherish the hope that it continues, generally speaking, to improve. The hon. member for Stockport blamed my right hon. friend for dealing with future things. I must say that the speech of the hon. gentleman is exactly subject to the same objection; because the greater part of that speech consisted not of argument, but of confident predictions of what would be the consequences of a repeal of the Corn-laws. And, if I could believe that his predictions would be fully verified, my objections, even to a repeal of the Corn-laws, would be considerably weakened. But I think the hon. gentleman and his friends greatly overrate the advantages of a repeal of the Corn-laws; he points out the great discrepancies that there are between the wealth of some portion of the community and the poverty of others, and he says, and says with truth—"You cannot say that the condition of this country is perfect, while there are 1,600,000 paupers in it." He speaks of the midland districts, and of the state of the manufacturing community; and he infers thence that you must proceed to the immediate repeal of the Corn-laws. It is my confident belief that, establish what system of Corn-laws you please, you must expect to find such differences in this country and in a state of society like this; you must expect to find those extremes of wealth and poverty. They exist, I believe, in every country on the face of the earth. I doubt, indeed, whether the more civilization and refinement increases, there be not a greater tendency towards those extremes. Suppose the hon. gentleman to have succeeded in repealing the Corn-laws, he would find that he had done little towards preventing or curing the evils he points out; and we should then be again told, having failed to cure this great evil, having failed to improve the condition of the labouring classes, we must proceed to some other mode of relief, some other remedy for the evil. I wish, Sir, to reconcile the gradual approach towards sound principles, with a full and cautious consideration of the relations which have been established, and the interests that have grown up under a different system. The hon. member for Wolverhampton tells us that the system of protection has endured since 1688—he admits that since the period of the revolution, since the accession to the throne of this country of King William—protection has been given to agriculture, and it has been maintained up to the present time. Be it so—I ask, under that state of the law in this country and in Ireland, what peculiar and special relations have grown up? Is it then fit that these relations should be disturbed as the hon. member proposes to disturb them, or is it not more for the general interest that in returning to what I admit to be a better condition of society and the establishment of better principles, we should proceed with caution and deliberation—that our steps should be taken, not hastily, but with the fullest consideration of the interests which have grown up under a state of law which has endured for 150 years? Now, what has been the course of our legislation for the last few years? Can it be said that we refused to recognise the soundness of these principles? Can it be said that we have contended that agriculture stands on some different footing with respect to them from other interests of this country? In 1842, we found a Corn-law existing, which gave very great protection to agriculture. The hon. gentleman says, that when I brought forward the present Corn-law, I avowed it was not my object to reduce that protection; but my right hon. friend has truly stated, that in bringing forward the present Corn-law, I did contemplate a material reduction in the amount of protection given by the last Corn-law. Where there is now a duty of 12s. per quarter on the import of foreign wheat, there was then, I think, a duty of 25s. or 30s.; and I might refer to the operation of the law since its passing to show that under the present law corn has been brought in, and at such times, as under the former law could not have been introduced. In 1842, there was an absolute prohibition on the import of foreign cattle and foreign meat; that prohibition has been removed, and there has been substituted a moderate amount of duty on the import, both of foreign cattle and meat. The hon. member for Durham has gone into a long detail of alterations in the law by which the protection given to agriculture has been gradually abated; he referred to the immense quantities of foreign bark which have been introduced, and asked the agriculturists whether they were not entirely satisfied with the existing price of bark? I believe many of them would, in reply, inform

him that they were not satisfied, and that the import of foreign bark had materially reduced the price of that grown in this country. Again, timber is an article in which the agricultural interest is deeply concerned. By the tariff of 1842, the monopoly of timber, the produce of this country, in the home market, was materially abated by the law then introduced. Timber, the produce of the Baltic, is admitted at a much lower rate of duty than formerly; and timber, the produce of Canada, is admitted at a merely nominal duty; and I apprehend that the effect of these alterations is, that while there has been increased demand for foreign timber, that has been accompanied with a material reduction of the price of timber in this country. I mention these facts to show that the government, in the laws they have passed, have not considered the agricultural interest as specially entitled to protection, or as exempted from the operation of those principles which have been applied to other classes. But the law of 1842 passed, and I am bound to say that it passed with the general concurrence of the agricultural representatives in this House. I do not think hon. gentlemen on the opposite side are justified in talking of the agricultural members as having voted with any feeling of disinclination to promote the object of that law, or that those hon. members in any way showed their dissent from any reduction of the protective duties which that measure involved. It may be true that, with respect to certain particular articles, objections were raised; but as against the measure generally, I do not believe it can be fairly said there was any strong opposition on the part of the agricultural members. It was unquestionably felt at the time to be an important measure, and one effecting a very considerable reduction of protective duties. But I think the hon. member for Northamptonshire has justly claimed for the agricultural interest a willing submission to a new state of things, a ready yielding up of the privileges which they have hitherto enjoyed, from the belief that they will derive an equal share of benefit with their fellow-men, from a measure intended for the general good. What have been the other effects of the operation of the new corn-law of 1842? We were told that the retention of that law would be inconsistent with the prosperity of the manufacturing interest of the country. But has that prediction been verified? Concurrently with that law you have seen a revival of industry, an extension of commerce and a degree of manufacturing activity, which we could hardly have hoped for or contemplated within so short a time. All this has existed concurrently with the new corn-law of 1842. The hon. member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) has admitted these results; but he has contended that they might have been carried further. Of course, it is impossible not to extend our wishes for manufacturing prosperity, and I quite admit that it might be carried further than at present; but all I say is, that we have now arrived at a point which, in 1842, we hardly expected to reach in so limited a time, and which some persons thought was utterly inconsistent with the enactment of this new corn-law. It was said that this new corn-law gave no security against great fluctuations in price; but I must say that during its existence there has been greater steadiness of price than almost at any other period. I was looking at the price of wheat since September last, and I think that during every week since then, the price of wheat has hardly varied more than 1s. 9d. a quarter. The lowest price during that period was 45s. 2d., and the highest 46s. 11d. In 1842, there was an expectation of a bad harvest; but taking the price from September or October, 1842, I must say that there has been less of fluctuation of price than at almost any similar period. But it would probably be said that this was the consequence of favourable harvests; but though the harvest last year was tolerably good for wheat, yet, as far as barley and oats were concerned, it was defective. It is impossible to deny that the produce of barley in the last two years was deficient; and I doubt whether the oat crop was very abundant. Therefore, as far as oats and barley are concerned, the law has been exposed to the operations of deficient harvests. Nevertheless there has been a gradual monthly importation, particularly of barley, under the existing law, and the prices have not materially varied. Then it has been said that the present law holds out expectations which are false, and which tend to check agricultural improvement. I must say, that I think that statement totally devoid of foundation. I doubt whether, during any period in the past history of this country, there has been more rapid progress in agricultural improvement than during the last three years. I

think it therefore impossible to say that the existence of the present corn-law is incompatible with the application of capital and science to the improvement of agriculture. Therefore, these defects, which have been charged on the existing law, are defects to which it is not justly liable. It cannot be said to be inconsistent with the extension of commerce, and the demand for manufacturing industry; nor can it be said to be incompatible with steadiness of price. It appears to me that you cannot take any effectual precaution against fluctuations in the value of an article like that of corn; that you cannot take perfect security against that which you consider one of the main defects of the existing law, namely, the uncertainty as to the future harvest. While there are great speculations in corn, great quantities of corn will be brought into the markets of this country. I believe that uncertainty as to the production of a future harvest will always exist. There will always be a degree of uncertainty as to whether a good harvest may not diminish the value of corn; and therefore those who hold foreign corn, if they think that the prices of domestic produce will be affected by the goodness or badness of a harvest, will conduct their speculations or transactions accordingly: and in the months of August and September, whether you have a fixed duty or no duty at all, you must expect that, on account of that uncertainty, considerable quantities of corn will be imported. But it would be wrong to suppose that these quantities of corn are thrown upon the market at once. They are retained for home consumption, but are not immediately thrown on the home market. Taking these facts into consideration, I do not think that the existing corn-law is fairly liable to the charges brought against it, or that the predictions made as to its failure have been verified; and, therefore, I am not prepared to accept the proposition of the noble lord opposite, and still less that of the hon. member for Wolverhampton, in lieu of the present corn-law. I do not defend the present corn-law on the ground that it is for the especial advantage of any particular interest. I believe that it would be impossible to maintain any law that should be supposed to be founded on that consideration, which it had been said this law is founded on, namely a desire to increase the rents of landlords. But this I do believe, that looking at the condition of the agricultural interest generally, and all those connected with it, looking at the obligations to which they are subject, I think that any such change in the corn-law as that contemplated by the hon. gentleman, might tell injuriously no doubt on the landlords and the proprietors of the soil; but I believe that the objection to it would be that it would tell more injuriously on the great class whose prosperity is involved with that of the proprietors. It has been said, that the law is required, because incumbrances on estates must be provided for. I say that it is impossible to found the defence of the law on such an idea, or upon the exclusive interests of any class. But I must say that there are social and moral relations, which it is impossible altogether to overlook. Under the state of the law, as existing, there has grown up a relation between landlord, tenant, and labourer, which does not rest merely on pecuniary considerations. The landlords and proprietors in this country—at least in great districts of it—do not look on land in the light of a mere commercial speculation. I believe that it would be a great evil if they did so. According to the principles for which the hon. gentleman opposite contends, I apprehend that he would say, “let the landlord make as much of his land as he can—he has a right to do that;” on the same principle he has a right commercially speaking, on the termination of a lease, to let his land for the utmost he can get for it. I will not say that this is not one of the modes, if you abolish the corn-laws, by which the difficulties the landlord will have to meet will be met. Possibly it may be said, let the landlord—the principles of trade having been suddenly applied to the produce of the land—let him regard the land itself in the same light; let there be no reference to the relations that have existed, perhaps for centuries, between him and the family that occupies that land; let him have no regard for the labourer; let him take the man who can do most for his 10s. or 12s. a week; let the old and weak receive no consideration, because they cannot perform the labour the young, the healthy, and the active, can do; though the land may be so regarded, yet in every thing but a purely commercial sense, in a social and moral point of view, I should deeply regret it. It would alter the character of the country, and be accompanied by social evils which no pecu-



niary gain, no strict application of a purely commercial principle, could compensate. I will not carry this too far; I will not—because I cannot—say that agriculture ought to be exempt from the gradual application of principles that have been applied to other interests. I fairly own that I doubt whether protection could be vindicated on the ground of being independent of foreign supply. I think it would be of very great importance—I should rejoice in the fact—I should rejoice in the result, that the greater portion of our supply was derived from our internal resources. In every point of view, commercially, morally, and socially, it would be an immense advantage if the agriculture of the country was in so improved a state that we could rely on our own international resources for the greater part of our supply. But the hope to make ourselves entirely independent of foreign supply is out of the question. If that had been our view, we ought not to have relinquished the prohibition on the import of cattle and meat, and we ought to have established such a protection on corn as to have ensured the application of an amount of capital to the land which would have secured that independence. That would have been, I think, an erroneous policy; and though I still contend that it would be a great advantage for us to be independent of foreign supply, and that we should look to our own produce as the main source of our supply, yet it would be impossible to defend protection on the ground that we ought to be completely independent of all foreign countries. I have attempted to show, therefore, that during the three or four years the present government have been in power, they have altered our commercial laws in a manner consistent with sound principles, and have not excepted the Corn-laws, and other laws which prohibited the importation of foreign agricultural products. In no respect, upon any article imported, have they increased protecting duties. You may think we have not carried the principle far enough; but, at any rate, every act we have done has been an act tending to establish, with respect to the import of every foreign article, that principle which I believe to be a sound one—the gradual abatement of purely protecting duties. I must also claim for them the liberty and the power of continuing, according to their judgment, the application of that principle. I am bound to say that the experience of the past, with respect to those articles on which high duties have been removed, confirms the impression founded on the general principle. But, Sir, with the strong opinion I entertain, that in the application of this principle it is necessary to exercise the utmost caution for the purpose of ensuring its general acceptance and stability, I cannot consent to give my vote for a proposition that implies the total disregard of every such consideration, in the application of the principle of free trade. If the doctrine is good for corn, it is good for every thing else. The proposition of the hon. gentleman, though confined to corn, applies to every other production, not only to every article of agricultural produce, but to every other you can name, because he contends that the duty on foreign importation restricts supply, impedes the free exchange of the products of labour, and, therefore, ought to be abolished. All our colonial interest will then become subject to this principle; and I do believe that the instantaneous application of such a principle, either to the agricultural or colonial interest, though it may be accompanied by some immediate fall of prices, would not be for the advantage of the whole community. It is upon that ground, because I believe it would be injurious to every interest, because I believe your colonial relations could not coexist with the sudden application of such a law, because I believe the interest of Ireland would be prejudiced by a sudden importation of corn; and foreseeing in such a sudden importation no security for a permanent continuance of low prices, I shall give my decided vote against the proposition of the hon. gentleman.

Motion negatived by a majority of 132.

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## MARITIME DEFENCES.

JUNE 13, 1845.

In a conversation, consequent upon some remarks by Sir C. Napier, as to the state of our naval forts and arsenals, and harbours for the protection of the mercantile marine,

SIR R. PEEL observed, that he supposed the noble lord opposite (Lord Palmerston) would not bring forward that evening the motion of which he had given notice, but which he had not fixed for that occasion. With respect to the gallant officer (Sir C. Napier,) he should observe that he had a great advantage over her Majesty's government in discussing that subject. The gallant officer knew perfectly well that it would be inconsistent with the duty of ministers to discuss those details into which he had entered. The gallant officer might think it a great public advantage to point out all the weak points of our coast; and he might deem it his duty to call the attention of parliament and the government to the mode in which this harbour might be destroyed, or that arsenal be dismantled. That was the gallant officer's view of his duty to his country; but the gallant officer should know that it would be inconsistent with the duty of the government to enter with him into the discussion of details of that nature. He had interfered with his gallant friend (Captain Boldero) whose duty it was to move the Ordnance estimates; and he had requested him not to answer the gallant officer in detail. He should think that it would require an outlay of £25,000,000 at least, to complete that system of naval defence which the gallant commodore advocated. The gallant commodore had gone through the recommendation of the commissioners, who had investigated the question of the construction of harbours of refuge in the Channel; and he had not only insisted on the desirableness of constructing those harbours to which the commissioners had alluded, but he had found fault with them because they had not also recommended the construction of harbours of refuge in Dartmouth and other places. The gallant commodore had told them that they ought to construct harbours in the eastern coast for the protection of their coal trade; and he had also stated that there was no port in our western coast but the port of Liverpool, that could be considered safe from the attack of an enemy. He supposed that the gallant officer would also include in his scheme a supplementary outlay on the coast of Ireland, although he had omitted to make any reference to that part of the question. But the gallant commodore would evidently include, in his proposal, the whole of the English coast, and the coast of Ireland. He could, however, go beyond the gallant officer, and include the Channel Islands in his outlay. But if they were prepared to incur, during a time of peace like the present, an expense which they had never incurred in time of war, there would be no limit to the amount of their estimates. He did not, however, say, that it would be prudent on the part of this country to trust to present appearances, or to the pacific declarations of other nations; but he thought, on the contrary, that it was the true policy of this country to take every reasonable precaution against any contingencies that might arise. They ought, no doubt, to calculate upon the possibility of war, and feel that that great calamity might yet come upon them; and therefore, although he protested against the doctrine of the gallant officer respecting the outlay we ought to incur upon our coast, he did not say that we ought to neglect those reasonable precautions which would prevent us from being taken unawares, and unprovided in the event of a war breaking out. What was the course which the government had taken? Why, they had already proposed an increase in our navy estimates; and they had also selected officers who were to consider the questions of improving our harbours, and adding to our naval defences. He knew that it would not be wise on his part to enter into detailed explanations upon that subject; but still the gallant commodore had precluded the possibility of his observing an entire silence with respect to it. The increase in the estimates this year had no reference to the construction of harbours of refuge in the Channel. With respect to the defences of our ports and arsenals, he could readily believe, that with that pressure in our finances which had existed during several years previous to the accession of the present government to office, it was impossible that those ports and arsenals could have been improved or strengthened in the manner that would have been prudent under other circumstances. Her Majesty's government had appointed commissioners, and had received from them the fullest reports respecting the defence of our harbours; but it was impossible for him to enter into details upon that subject. The gallant commodore might come down to the House with his plan, and might state that in a particular fort there were but twenty-three guns; but he would not follow the example of the gallant officer, and attempt to show what were the defences of Pembroke, for instance, although he might

differ from the gallant officer upon that point. But they had received the report of the commissioners, and they had proposed a considerable increase in the Ordnance estimates this year. The gallant commodore was most anxious to avert the danger to which he considered that this country was exposed; and even the chance of London being deprived of its usual supply of coals had made a great impression on his mind. Now, he knew that the motives which had induced the gallant commodore to make his statement were good; but he could not help thinking that his apprehensions were exaggerated; and he should also say, that he doubted the policy and the prudence of his mode of proceeding. With respect to harbours of refuge, he could assure the hon. gentleman, the member for Dover, that the subject had not escaped the attention of her Majesty's government. But if there were any one thing in respect to which the utmost precautions were unusually necessary, it was the spending of £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 of money in erecting harbours of refuge. He had himself lived to see a harbour of refuge constructed at an expense of hundreds of thousands of pounds, which harbour had become almost utterly valueless, because sufficient caution had not been taken to ascertain the nature of its sedimentary deposits. The commissioners had estimated the cost of the construction of a harbour at Dover at £2,500,000. That was no doubt a general estimate; but it was the best which the commissioners could form upon the imperfect data before them. The cost of stone would be a most important item in any such estimate; and let it be remembered that there was no stone at Dover for the construction of a harbour, and that the best authorities were of opinion that the chalk cliffs of Dover would supply no fitting material for such a work. The government had engaged the most eminent engineers in this country to report to them upon that question. They had selected five or six distinguished engineers to whom they had referred several points upon which the report of the admiralty commissioners had not been quite satisfactory; those commissioners having themselves suggested that before any resolution were come to respecting the construction of a harbour of refuge at Dover, it was desirable that experiments should be made with regard to the amount of the sedimentary deposits there. The engineers appointed for the purpose were now considering that subject. The construction of such a work might involve an outlay, not of hundreds of thousands, but of millions; and before that work was undertaken, it was manifestly desirable that they should have the most reasonable grounds for believing that it would attain its purpose. The commissioners thought, for obvious reasons, that harbours of refuge in the Channel were entitled in an eminent degree to the first consideration. He would content himself upon that occasion with giving his assurance that the whole subject had received, and was still receiving, the fullest consideration on the part of her Majesty's government. He could not, however, deem it consistent with his duty to propose to the House of Commons an enormous outlay, without being able to show that every precaution had been taken; first, to ensure the selection of the best place; and next, that every guarantee had been afforded that a work of that kind would, if undertaken, be so constructed as to afford the greatest possible amount of advantage to the public.

Subject dropped.

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## NEW ZEALAND.

JUNE 17, 1845.

In the course of the very long debate on Mr. Charles Buller's motion, "That the House resolve itself into a committee, to consider the state of the colony of New Zealand, and the case of the New Zealand Company"—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: Sir, it would be unfortunate if any differences connected with party considerations, or any conflict that there may have been between the colonial department and the New Zealand Company, should divert our attention from the consideration of what is due to the interests of that colony which is the immediate subject of this discussion. Sir, I willingly admit that the interests of that colony are recommended to us by many considerations. I look at the extent of that colony, at its line of coast, at the quantity of land in it capable of cultivation and improvement; I look, above all, at its position and the new importance which it

has acquired by the events which have been passing in the Pacific, and by the opening of the trade with China. I agree with the noble lord (Lord John Russell) that there appears every probability, as far as we can form a judgment, that that colony, if its interests are duly regarded and its welfare fostered, is destined to occupy a most important station in the world. I agree that its relation to this country is most important. Surveying the unoccupied portion of the globe, I know of no part of that globe more calculated to afford a profitable field for employment to the superabundant population of this country. Every consideration, therefore, I willingly admit, recommends to our careful attention the interests of this infant society. Sir, the question is whether you will leave the charge of these in the hands of the executive government, or whether you will to-night assume to the House of Commons the functions of determining on the future government of the colony? The hon. gentleman the member for Liskeard (Mr. Charles Buller) moves that we should go into committee on this question; and that gentleman, the most conversant with the affairs of the colony, proposes fifteen or sixteen resolutions for their deliberation. But we have been told by those who are going to support him, that these resolutions are for the most part inapplicable; and that although they will vote for going into committee, it will be impossible in the committee for them to acquiesce in his resolutions. Now, what is the course the government proposes to pursue under circumstances which I admit to be critical? Disapproving of the conduct of a governor—for whose personal character I avow I entertain the highest respect—for the difficulties of whose position I own I must make great allowance—we have yet signified, in the most formal and authoritative manner, that his conduct in the administration of affairs we do not approve of; and with reluctance, but in the performance of a necessary duty, we have removed him from a post which he undertook from the highest and most patriotic motives. We have shown, therefore, in the first instance, that we have no desire to consult the feelings and interests of a friend, to the prejudice of the colony. We have next made, or contemplate making, the appointment of his successor. The policy of that appointment has been questioned by some; but I apprehend the highest authority with regard to his qualifications must be the noble lord (Lord John Russell) who selected him for the situation he now fills. And what is the character the noble lord gives of him? He says that one of the greatest difficulties in colonial government that had to be solved was found in the position of South Australia; that he selected Captain Gray to solve that difficulty, and that he entirely succeeded; that difficulties which appeared to be insuperable, were overcome by his discretion, energy, and judgment. We propose now to submit the solution of these yet greater difficulties to Captain Grey. It has been objected that he is too young a man. Well, but at all events he is five years older than he was when the noble lord selected him, and he undertook the government of South Australia. Moreover, he has had the benefit of the intervening experience in his attempts to solve these great difficulties to which the noble lord referred. Then, some say, that he is not of high rank enough. As if the native chiefs of New Zealand did not attach more importance to past success, and the character and energy of a man, than to his conventional rank and station. He holds the rank only of captain in her Majesty's army; but he has been eminently successful in rescuing a colony from difficulty, and therefore we select him for the command. The noble member for Sunderland may say that we ought to have taken a man of higher rank in the army; but surely the true qualifications for this post are past success, and confidence in the character and judgment of the individual in question. Then it is said that we have not had the benefit of personal communication with him. But I must say, that experience does not show that personal communication is of much use in enabling us to overcome colonial difficulties. The noble lord, I presume, had the opportunity of personal communication with Captain Hobson. [Lord John Russell: No; Lord Normanby had.] Oh! the noble lord surely will not make a distinction between Lord Normanby and himself. [Lord J. Russell: I had no personal communication with him.] But the Secretary of State in that government, of which the noble lord was the organ in the House of Commons, had. He had also the opportunity of personal communication with Mr. Spain upon the duties of a Land Commissioner; and we had the opportunity of similar communication with Captain Fitzroy. All these opportunities have failed of ensuring

success. I do not mean to say that personal communication may not be in many cases an advantage; but if you have a governor administering the affairs of a colony comparatively near to this, and a man so eminently qualified as Captain Grey, a man who has studied the affairs of the colony, and has recently written upon the subject with the utmost judgment and good sense, I cannot think that the circumstance of his absence from this country constitutes any disqualification for the command. The noble lord says, that we shall probably give Captain Grey instructions to enter into disputes and squabbles with Colonel Wakefield on the one side, and somebody else on the other. Really it is very unworthy of the noble lord to make any such observation. We shall give him the assurance of our entire confidence, and confer upon him all the authority which is consistent with the law and constitution of this country. We shall give him an unfettered discretion, laying down, as far as we can, the general principles by which we think he ought to be guided; but knowing the difficulties existing of giving instructions from the government at a distance of so many thousand miles, under the circumstances in which that colony was placed, the discretion of Captain Grey will be unfettered by any particular instructions. Now, with respect to the future government of this colony, I must say, that looking at the distance at which it is removed from the seat of government at home, and considering the great difficulty of issuing orders for its government in this country, I am for one strongly inclined to think that a representative government will be suited for the condition of the people of that colony. It has not the objections that might be applied to a penal colony; for you have at any rate released New Zealand from the evils attendant on a penal settlement. Speaking, therefore, on general principles, I think the government of that colony, in connection with those immediately interested in its local prosperity, assigning to them the administration of its affairs, is a form of government well adapted for New Zealand. In short, I cannot see what assignable interest you can have, except in the commercial and social prosperity of that colony. The only possible ground of connection that can exist will depend upon its being profitable. It is impossible that, at the distance at which we are, this country can seek any advantage in its connection with New Zealand, except reciprocal interests; and, above all, the local prosperity of the colony. At the same time it is impossible to apply without great consideration the principles of representative government to islands where the circumstances are so peculiar. The noble lord thinks Auckland improperly selected for the seat of executive government; but I apprehend there were reasons for its selection, of great weight. I apprehend that, with reference to naval and military considerations, the claims of Auckland were entitled to great consideration. Whether it would be wise to transfer the seat of government to some other place, is one of those circumstances that must be influenced by local rather than by general considerations; but we ought not to select any other without reference to the general advantage. But, considering the extent of the islands, and the distance of the settlements, it is no easy matter to introduce the principle of representative government, according to the construction we place upon it. It appears to me that by far the best plan would be the formation, in the first instance, of municipal governments, with extensive powers of local taxation, and meeting all local demands. In the opinion of Mr. Burke, the form of representative government in our North American colonies grew out of these municipal governments. In, I think, his letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol, he says—"These representative governments in North America have grown up, I know not how; but there they are. The people who left this country, left it with those feelings of pride, and of love, and attachment to liberty which belong to self-government. They began with municipal institutions. Distance and absence of control gradually nurtured them, so that from small beginnings they grew up into representative assemblies; and there I find them. I will not inspect them too narrowly; I will not inquire too closely into their establishment. I believe they are the natural growth of such institutions; and those who have colonies, especially British colonies, must expect such results."

Now, I am strongly inclined to think that the germ of a representative government in a colony ought to be in these municipalities, widening their sphere by degrees according as the land becomes settled and peopled; and I doubt whether that would not be a safer mode than that of establishing among so thin a population a represen-

tative government that would require deputies from the people of Auckland and of Wellington to meet together, separated as they are by such a great distance. That will be one of the subjects which will be referred to the consideration of the able man whom we have appointed to govern that colony. I do not think it would be wise to adopt the suggestion of the New Zealand Company to make a proprietary government. I believe the best form of government will be that the Crown here should superintend the external regulations of that country, and that the local executive government should manage the internal affairs of the colony. It would be difficult for the Crown to superintend the relations of the colony, in conjunction with another party: to have two authorities, the Crown and the company, each exercising control over the local government, would be a system never tried, and so anomalous, that I do not think success would attend it. I think but a very short interval would elapse before the local representative government would deny the authority of the government at home to control the New Zealand Company, and we should find that it would be no easy matter for the Crown to retain its authority. I think, therefore, that a system of proprietary government, which implies control over the local government, to be divided with the Crown, would be one from which no good could arise. Sir, with respect to the New Zealand Company, I will say at once, that I think it important to maintain that company in the full exercise of the power committed to it—I mean the power of settlement. I think in that way it may be made a useful instrument of government, not exercising any interference with the affairs of the state, and not exercising any control over these matters, but as a great commercial company acting on enlightened principles, and aiding the executive government in devising the best and most extended means of emigration, and of adding to the employment required by our surplus population. I do not despair that these relations will yet be established, and that without exercising any powers of the administration at home, they will subsist as a company for the future, acting, I trust, in concert and harmony with the government, and as an useful instrument for promoting the colonization of New Zealand. Now, with respect to the revenue—for we were particularly challenged to state our opinion upon the subject—with respect to the revenue, it is very difficult, at such a great distance, to do more than to lay down general principles. But I must say, with all my respect for Captain Fitzroy, the abandonment of all revenue constitutes a most serious evil. The customs' regulations should be re-established, if there is no other mode of raising a revenue less onerous to the people of that country. The fact of their having been abandoned does not constitute, in my mind, any objection to their re-establishment. But at this distance from the colony, and without a knowledge of the circumstances that have occurred, to say that they shall be revived is a matter that must be left to the consideration of him who has been appointed to conduct the government of the colony. I say this without any mixture of party feeling; and I may again recur to what I stated at the commencement of my observations, that I should consider it a most unfortunate circumstance if, in the midst of our personal and party conflicts, we permitted the regard that was due to the interests of the colony to escape our attention. If I wanted any other motive, the sympathy I feel for the settlers, who went out in expectation of finding a prosperous home, would induce me to take this course. Having said thus much, I now come to the motion of the hon. gentleman, and which, according to his speech, is intended to fix a censure on the administration of my noble friend. Sir, I shall vote against the motion of the hon. gentleman, because the resolutions which the most competent judge of the affairs of New Zealand, who has read more, and written more, with respect to New Zealand than, I believe, any other man in existence—because those seventeen resolutions which the hon. member has proposed have nothing better to encourage me to agree to them, than that they are admitted to be inapplicable, by one of the best judges, to the state of affairs in that colony. That would be enough to make me determine to oppose them. I admit there is one resolution which has a direct and practical bearing on the case of New Zealand—that which declares that respect should be paid to the treaty of Waitangi. Everybody says he is ready to respect it; but there is a great difference of opinion as to the mode in which that treaty should be respected. But the hon. gentleman intends his motion to be a condemnation of my noble friend. Well, if ever there was a

motion calculated to do injustice to a public servant, that is the motion. You are judging now of the conduct of my noble friend by your wishes and feelings with regard to this colony of New Zealand. You find that it would be advantageous to this country, which I admit, if you were not embarrassed by this treaty of Waitangi. I say nothing more of it than that it is an absolute engagement, which according to a proper construction of it, ought to be respected. Whatever are the honourable engagements which this country has contracted, they ought, in my opinion, to be fulfilled. New Zealand is a country, according to the noble lord (Lord John Russell), and I trust he is justified, destined to brilliant fortunes; but a relation with it would begin under unfortunate auspices, whatever might be its immediate advantages, if it were tainted with a breach of honour. Now, in order that you may judge of the justice of those imputations which have been cast upon my noble friend, I must recall to your recollection the circumstances under which our connexion with New Zealand commenced. The feelings entertained were very different from those of the present day; there was a different impression on the public mind with respect to colonial relations eleven years ago, when your relations with New Zealand began. In 1834, there was a strong feeling in the parliament and in the public of this country, that England was chargeable with injustice in its treatment of the aborigines. That public man whose death has been sincerely lamented by all who admire the devotion of great talents to the cause of humanity—I mean, Sir Fowell Buxton—moved in 1834, in this House an address to the Crown, to this effect:—"That, deeply impressed with the duty of acting on the principles of justice and humanity with the native inhabitants of British colonial settlements, we call upon the Crown to adopt different principles from those which had been heretofore acted upon in some of our colonial establishments."

In 1836, a select committee was appointed at the instance of the same Sir Fowell Buxton; evidence was taken in that year, and a report was made in 1837—a most full and able document—detailing the result of our relations with the natives in some of our colonial settlements, which made a deep impression on the country. There was an account of our treatment of them in Newfoundland, of the mode in which the natives of that country, under our connexion had wasted away from a numerous body, who, according to the reports of former travellers who had visited the colony for the purpose of hunting, had erected lines of tents of at least thirty miles in length. Now, these, I say, had dwindled away to two or three individuals, who were left in the centre of the island. We had an account of the establishment and progress of our colony among the Caffres; we had an account of the manner in which the natives of Van Diemen's Land had been transferred to some other island; from the committee appointed to consider the measures necessary to secure to the native inhabitants the true observance of justice and the protection of their rights. This is one of the observations of the report:—"It may be presumed that the native inhabitants of any land have an incontrovertible right to their own soil—a sacred right, however, which appears not to have been understood by this country."

That report was made in 1837, and in 1839, arose the question whether we should form new relations with New Zealand. The Marquess of Normanby was acting under the influence of the recommendations contained in that report. It may be said, that he made improvident engagements and wrote unwise despatches. It is as easy for you to lay down these doctrines with respect to Lord Normanby as you are now disposed to condemn Lord Stanley; but be it remembered what was the public feeling in regard to our relations with the aborigines which influenced Lord Normanby in 1839. It was under the influence of those feelings, and in the spirit of which the despatches were written, that your relation with New Zealand was formed, and which now constitutes the difficulty with which Lord Stanley has to contend. The first despatch which Lord Normanby wrote referred expressly—and I cite it as a proof that what I am stating is correct—to the report of your select committee, and your adoption of the principles of that report, which had made a deep impression on the public mind, with regard to the relations you should establish with the aboriginal natives of any country in which you might form a settlement. It is not then the executive government, but you, who are responsible; for you agreed to the address to the Crown, praying the Crown to protect the rights of the aborigines; you are responsible for the appointment of these committees; and you are responsible for the

doctrines laid down in their reports, for you adopted them. Well, the question arose, as to establishing fresh relations with New Zealand. Lord Normanby expressly referred to the report of the committee. Lord Normanby said,—"I have concurred with that committee in thinking that the increase of national wealth and power, promised by the acquisition of New Zealand, would be a most inadequate compensation for the injury that must be inflicted on this kingdom itself by embarking in a measure essentially unjust, and but too certainly fraught with calamity to a numerous and inoffensive people, whose title to the soil and sovereignty of New Zealand is indisputable, and has been solemnly recognised by the British government."

The report of the committee had said, that the right of the natives to their country is incontrovertible, and Lord Normanby, in establishing his relations with New Zealand, refers to the report of the committee, and states that the right of the people of New Zealand to the soil and sovereignty of the islands is indisputable. Then you acknowledged New Zealand as a sovereign and independent state. Now, I think, that you were wrong in doing so. I think, that you acted under impressions which were no doubt very natural; but, I think, that those impressions induced you and the executive government of that period to adopt a course which has weakened your future authority in the colony, and has proved injurious to the natives. I think, that it would have been much better if we had claimed the right to New Zealand upon the ground of discovery, than to hold it by mere cession. You may say, that you have established your right to the northern island; but I think, that the cession by chiefs, representing 8000 inhabitants, is much less binding than our title to it on the ground of discovery. I do not hesitate to say that the treaty of Waitangi has been a most unwise one, even for the natives. I think it would have been a much better course for us to have asserted the right of sovereignty on the ground of discovery, than to have accepted that sovereignty from the chiefs, and to have negotiated with them for the sale of the lands. These, however, are the engagements which you formed, and by which we must be bound. These are inconvenient, I admit, but you have already sanctioned them. You have held that language through your secretaries of state, and do you then think it reconcilable with justice that you should now make a victim of my noble friend the present secretary of state for the colonies, who has but followed up the policy pursued by his predecessors in office? Do not refer to what Lord Stanley wrote in 1842, but look at the instructions that were given by you in 1839 to Captain Hobson to form that treaty. "These are the doctrines which you then held, which I think will fully illustrate the *animus* with which you then acted:—"The Queen, in common with her Majesty's predecessors, disclaims for herself every pretence to seize on the island, or to attempt to govern it on the part of Great Britain, unless the free and express approbation of the natives, according to established usage, be obtained. Her Majesty's government authorize you to treat with the aborigines for the whole or any part of the island, which they will be willing to place under her dominion."

Here, then, were the instructions to Captain Hobson, to accept a partial sovereignty from the chiefs. Now, observe the instructions under which Captain Hobson was acting when he had made the treaty of Waitangi. Lord Normanby writes:—"Although the natives may regard your proposal with fear and distrust, these are impediments which may be gradually overcome by your sincerity and intercourse with them."

And who were the auxiliaries that were applied to to assist you in overcoming those difficulties? The missionaries, against whom you may now find it convenient to declaim and to point your attacks. What said Lord Normanby?—"You will, I trust, find your most powerful auxiliaries among the missionaries, who are highly deserving of your confidence."

I think, after having obtained the assistance of the missionaries to effect your object then, it is now rather hard to turn round upon them, and to denounce them as land-jobbers, and unworthy of that confidence which you were willing to award them at the former period. Lord Normanby went on to say—"Having by these methods obviated the dangers of the acquisition of large tracts of country by mere land-jobbers, it will be your duty to obtain, by fair and equal contracts with the natives, the cession to the Crown of such waste lands as may be progressively required for the occupation of settlers resorting to New Zealand."



There is, then, no claim here on the part of the Crown to possession of the territory in consequence of sovereignty. But Captain Hobson is not merely directed to treat with the natives, according as the wants of the settlers might arise, for lands not actually enjoyed or occupied by them, but for the waste lands of the islands, with the express admission that those lands were of no value to the natives; for Lord Normanby proceeds:—"To the natives, or their chiefs, much of the land of the country is of no actual use, and in their hands it possesses scarcely any exchangeable value."

Is it not clear, then, that Lord Normanby's instructions to Captain Hobson were to take the lands, not by any prerogative of the Crown, but by cession from the natives? I cannot avoid contrasting the language you then held in respect to these engagements, with what you now hold. The New Zealand Company state, with respect to these contracts—"We always have very serious doubts whether the treaty of Waitangi, made with naked savages by a consul invested with no plenipotentiary powers, without ratification by the Crown, could be treated by lawyers as any thing but a praiseworthy device for amusing and pacifying savages."

I believe that there are a good many lawyers in the New Zealand Company, and this may be the language of lawyers; and if you hold this doctrine, you will vote for the resolutions of the hon. and learned member for Liskeard; for the hon. and learned member's resolutions are founded upon that assumption. But what was the language of statesmen? Was it that those engagements were a praiseworthy device for amusing and pacifying savages? The noble lord opposite wrote to Captain Hobson as follows:—"Among the many barbarous tribes with which our extended colonial empire brings us into contact in different parts of the globe, there are none whose claims on the protection of the British Crown rest on grounds stronger than those of the New Zealanders. They are not mere wanderers over an extended surface in search of a precarious subsistence, nor tribes of hunters or of herdsmen, but a people among whom the arts of government have made some progress; who have established by their own customs a division and appropriation of the soil; who are not without some measure of agricultural skill, and a certain subordination of ranks, with usages having the character and authority of law. In addition to this, they have been formally recognised by Great Britain as an independent state, and even in assuming the dominion of the country this principle was acknowledged; for it is on the deliberate act and cession of the chiefs, on behalf of the people at large, that our title rests."

That was the language held by statesmen. The treaty was entered into with as much formality as their usages permitted; and are you now prepared, because you find the engagements onerous and inconvenient—inconvenient not only to yourselves, but injurious to the natives even—are you prepared to disclaim and repudiate the act of statesmen, and to concur with the lawyers that the treaty is a mere praiseworthy device for amusing and pacifying savages? You must hear these things before you give your votes; you set the example which has been followed by the succeeding government, and do not attempt to transfer to Lord Stanley the responsibility of your own acts. What has my noble friend done but carried out your avowed intentions? and, before you condemn him, you must hear the qualifications and reserves under which the natives of New Zealand entered into this engagement. Observe what the treaty was that was framed under those instructions to Captain Hobson: you cannot escape from that consideration. Captain Hobson reports to the authorities at home, that in pursuance of his instructions, he summoned the native chiefs, whom he appointed to meet him at Mr. Bushby's house, at ten o'clock. He goes on to say:—"Preparatory to the meeting, I had appointed a levee to be held at Mr. Bushby's house, at eleven o'clock, to which I invited all the principal European inhabitants, the members of the Church of England and Catholic missions, and all the officers of this ship, and was highly gratified to find that nearly every one either here or in the neighbourhood, favoured me with their attendance.....I then read the treaty, a copy of which I have the honour to enclose; and on doing so, I dwelt on each article, and offered a few remarks explanatory of such passages as they might be supposed not to understand. Mr. Henry Williams, of the Church missionary society, did me the favour to interpret, and repeated in the native tongue, sentence by sentence, all I said. When I had finished

reading the treaty, I invited the chiefs to ask explanations on any points they did not comprehend, and to make any observations or remarks on it they pleased. Twenty or thirty chiefs addressed the meeting, five or six of whom opposed me with great violence, and at one period with such effect and so cleverly, that I began to apprehend an unfavourable impression would be produced. Rewahā, while addressing me, turned to the chiefs and said, 'Send the man away; do not sign the paper; if you do, you will be reduced to the condition of slaves, and be obliged to break stones for the roads. Your land will be taken from you, and your dignity as chiefs will be destroyed.' That was the language of the opposing chief. At the first pause, Neni came forward and spoke with a degree of natural eloquence that surprised all the Europeans, and evidently turned aside the temporary feeling that had been created against us. He first addressed his own companions. 'Reflect,' he said, 'on your condition. Reflect how much you have been exalted by European intercourse—how impossible it was for you to govern without frequent wars and bloodshed;' and he concluded by saying they should receive us, and place confidence in our principles."

This, remember, is a dry official report. "'You must,' he continued, 'be our father. You must not allow us to become slaves. You must preserve our customs, and never permit our lands to be taken from us.'"

Can you resist such an appeal to your equity and honour? Do not hastily renounce that character for honour and good faith to which this native chief appealed in his eloquent address. He said to the surrounding audience, "Rely on British honour;" and to the British representative, "you must be our father—take care our lands are not seized on against our will." "One or two other chiefs who were favourable, followed him in the same strain, and one reproached a noisy fellow named Kitigi, of the adverse party, with having spoken rudely to me. Kitigi, stung by the remark, sprang forward and shook me violently by the hand, and I received the salute apparently with equal ardour. This occasioned amongst the natives a general expression of applause, and a loud cheer from the Europeans, in which the natives joined; and thus the business of the meeting closed; further consideration of the question being adjourned to Friday at eleven o'clock, leaving, as I said, one clear day to reflect on my proposal."

The consequence was, that the treaty was signed. These were the circumstances under which this inconvenient treaty was made; and I ask will you commence your relations with the colony by an abandonment of the obligations you have entered into? I will say, that if ever there was a case where the stronger party was obliged by its position to respect the demands of the weaker, if ever a powerful country was bound by its engagements with a weaker, it was the engagement contracted under such circumstances with these native chiefs. Again, I say, you will enter upon a most inexpedient course of proceeding with your colonists, unless you are prepared to fulfil with honour whatever just engagements you have entered into. The noble lord said that he had been charged with having formed a contract with the New Zealand Company inconsistent with the treaty of Waitangi. He was particularly severe on those on this side of the House who had preferred this charge against him; but that was the very charge that had been preferred against him within the last fortnight by the New Zealand Company. It is wrong, perhaps, to attribute to any particular writer the authorship of a document signed by that company; but I cannot conceive any one could have written this despatch except the gentleman who made the speech which prefaced the present resolutions. It displays an intimate knowledge of the affairs of the New Zealand Company; and though signed by the noble lord the member for Staffordshire (Lord Ingestre,) I think it must have been written by the hon. and learned gentleman opposite (Mr. C. Buller.) It states that it is impossible to reconcile the missionary systems and that of the company; that missionaries and the company proceed on systems directly opposed to each other; and that the treaty of Waitangi was based on the missionary principle, while Lord John Russell acted on the colonization principle. The charge, therefore, of acting inconsistently with the treaty of Waitangi is not preferred by us; but, if I am right as to the authorship of this paper, the charge is made by the hon. and learned gentleman who sits near the noble lord, and with whom the noble lord says he is prepared to vote. There is nothing, I admit, inconsistent in the

engagements of the contract with the Company and the treaty of Waitangi, according to the noble lord's first construction of his own contract. The noble lord's first construction of the contract was clearly this, that he had understood (that is the phrase) that the New Zealand Company had made large purchases of land of the natives, and that they had an equitable title to land far exceeding in quantity that which the noble lord proposed to convey to them. If the noble lord was right in that, and if the New Zealand Company was right, there was nothing in the slightest degree inconsistent, in the treaty of Waitangi, with the contract. The New Zealand Company said they bought the land; the noble lord said, "I don't respect the purchase; but this I will undertake, I will assign out of the land you have so purchased, 1,000,000 of acres;" and the noble lord remained under the impression that that was the contract with the New Zealand Company; and I must say I think the secretary to the treasury (Mr. Cardwell) did demonstrate that that was the impression of the noble lord's agent, Mr. Spain, of the governor, nay, more, of Colonel Wakefield, until the period arrived when it became necessary to scrutinize the title of the New Zealand Company; and when that moment did arrive, and Mr. Spain began the inquiry, it was found that some other mode of fulfilling the contract must be devised, for the company could not establish their title to the land. Now, it was the second engagement substituted for the first, that was inconsistent with the treaty of Waitangi. Did my noble friend (Lord Stanley) insist on the literal observance of the treaty? Was it not his wish to deal liberally with the New Zealand Company? The wish of the noble lord was this, that as the company had not established a claim to any land, or at least any sufficient quantity of land, to assign to them all he could assign on a conditional title, subject to other parties hereafter proving a preferable title. With my noble friend's conscientious impressions as to the binding engagements of the treaty of Waitangi, he could do no more: he said to the company, "I will permit you within certain limits to choose the land you require, on the condition of a preferable claim not being established hereafter;" the onus of establishing that claim being thrown on the adverse party, and the right of possession being given to this powerful company. I am bound to say that the noble lord's intentions were not fulfilled as I think they ought to have been; but you ought not to make him morally responsible for the failure. He had not admitted the claim of the company as of right, but he consented on the part of the Crown to give it whatever he could give in substitution for the original understanding. He was prepared to do that which the noble lord opposite (Lord J. Russell) suggested some time since; he required that the parties should at once proceed to establish their claim to the land. He was ready to take possession on the part of the Crown of all that land to which no valid title was established, and from any land of which the Crown was possessed by a just title, to compensate the company for the disappointment to which it had been subjected. I leave the House to judge if my noble friend can be justly charged with harshness towards the company. You may censure him for his construction of the treaty of Waitangi, but it was a *bonâ fide* and conscientious construction. He does not admit the title of the natives to all the waste lands; he admits an obligation on the part of the native chiefs to establish their claim, but unfortunately, no steps have been taken towards doing it. The noble lord opposite speaks of registration as if it was like that of Yorkshire or Middlesex. It is nothing of the sort. It is only to establish a valid title to the land which is one of the subjects to which the attention of Captain Grey will be at first directed. But the real question is this—Whether you think it just, after the reference made to engagements entered into, after the instructions given by Lord Normanby, and after the approval of the noble lord opposite—whether you will now, by affirming these resolutions, affix a censure on my noble friend, who has done nothing more, in my opinion, than maintain the honour of the country, by respecting its engagements, and carrying into effect those opinions, which, whatever may be the doctrines you now hold, were the opinions of the House of Commons ten years from this period. If the House of Commons, in contradiction to that course, and by a manifest perversion of those doctrines maintained by the committee on the state of the aborigines, should now affirm that the treaty of Waitangi enables the Crown to dispossess the chiefs of all their land without full inquiry, you will lower the character of the House in the estimation of all who respect fidelity to public engage-

ments. If you affix a censure on my noble friend, you will pass a censure on one who has not yielded to the influence of powerful parties, who has not borne in mind that in this New Zealand Company there are men high in character and powerful in influence on this side of the House—who might have procured peace and repose by yielding to applications from those powerful parties—but who has thought it his public duty, with a conscientious regard to what is due to the honour and good faith of this powerful country, to maintain inviolate the engagements which it had contracted, against the interests of the powerful and the strong, by maintaining the guaranteed rights of the weak, the distant, and the unprotected.

Mr. Buller having replied, the House divided: Ayes, 173; Noes, 223; majority, 50.

## THE SLAVE-TRADE.

JULY 14, 1845.

Viscount Palmerston moved "That an humble address be presented to her Majesty, that she will be pleased to order that there be laid before the House a return of the names and descriptions of the witnesses examined before the mixed British and French commission, appointed to inquire into the best means for suppressing the Slave-trade; also, of extracts of such parts of their evidence as relate to the value of a mutual right of search as a means for that suppression."

SIR ROBERT PEELE: Sir, towards the close of the speech of the noble lord, he gave us the very unnecessary information, that it was not his intention to propose any resolution by which the opinion of the House would be taken as to the policy of the late treaty with France on the subject of the Slave-trade. Sir, I greatly doubt the soundness of the policy of the noble lord. If he has a strong opinion upon the subject, I think he ought to have disregarded the probability of his being in a minority. It is not a question whether the resolution is to give me a triumph or not; but I think it was a more correct course, which men who have stood in the position of the noble lord have taken, who, entertaining strong feelings on a question, have disregarded the probability of their being in a minority; but, for the purpose of producing an effect upon public opinion, they have recorded their opinions, and have not contented themselves with motions for the names of witnesses, or the evidence taken in a case. That is not the course of men who have strong feelings upon a subject; and as the noble lord was discourteous enough to inform me, in the course of his speech, that whatever I might say, he would not give credit to it, I am justified in informing the noble lord that I do not believe the reasons he has given for not bringing forward his resolution. I believe it was not the knowledge of the small minority that deterred the noble lord—it was because he knew that on this question many of those who concur with him in general politics would be sure not to agree with him in his condemnation of the convention lately signed between this country and France. I believe it will be found that many are of opinion that we have made no compromise of the honour, no sacrifice of the interests of this country; that we have done that which I shall attempt to show, if our object is to suppress the slave trade, will be a better instrument for the purpose than the convention signed by the noble lord. I shall not adopt an apologetic tone. I shall not say that in the circumstances of the public feeling of France, we were obliged to sacrifice this and that minor point. I shall demonstrate that the convention which has been recently signed, presents a better prospect of cordial co-operation of the second great maritime power in Europe with us in the suppression of the Slave-trade, than if we had refused to agree to this commission, and rested on the treaty of 1834. I rest my defence of this commission not on the deference that was due to the excited state of public feeling in France. I consider it a cause of congratulation that we have substituted an efficient instrument for one that, in the present state of feeling in France, never could have been made efficient at all. I consider it no matter of apology but of congratulation, that we have now a better prospect of suppressing this odious traffic than any that has opened upon this country of late years. Allow me, Sir, before I come to that which is really the subject matter of controversy between the noble

lord and myself—allow me to state in what respect I agree with him. I agree with him, in thinking that it would be unfortunate if this country were to relax in its efforts for the suppression of the Slave-trade. It would be difficult to calculate the results of a total forbearance on the part of this country, and, of course, on the part of every other, from making vigorous efforts for the suppression of the Slave-trade on the coast of Africa. I believe that the trade would be increased in a very great degree: and when we look at the success which our former efforts have achieved, we ought not alone to look at the good we have accomplished; but we ought to bear in mind the extent of the evils and the calamities we have prevented. I am not sure if I concur with the noble lord in thinking that the suppression of the Slave-trade would lead to the suppression of the status of slavery. I agree with the noble lord in thinking that the suppression of the Slave-trade would have a material effect on the amelioration of the condition of the slave. If we could impress upon the mind of the slaveholders, the knowledge that they would not have the means of increasing the number of their slaves by foreign supply, then, not from humane motives, but from the sordid motives by which slaveholders are actuated, they would provide better treatment at least for their female slaves, and possibly an amelioration in the condition of slaves in general. I wish to remind the House, that though the United States have suppressed the Slave-trade, yet slavery is still in existence in that country; and I do not believe that the extinction of the state of slavery in the United States will ever arise from the mere suppression of the Slave-trade. It may, and I believe must increase the attention of slaveholders to the breeding of slaves; but the mere suppression of the Slave-trade will not destroy slavery. I look to the extinction of the status of slavery in the United States with confidence, from the contact which the slaves are brought into with freedom in the degree of illumination and knowledge which they must thence derive; but, above all, I can never believe that our example, and the condition of the free labourers in the West Indies, which must become known to them from the increasing intercourse which is sure to take place between those two parts of the world, our colonial possessions and the United States—I can hardly believe that, with such an intercourse as this, slavery can stand as one of the permanent institutions of the United States. I regret to hear the tone and temper with which the noble lord spoke of Portugal. I believe that Portugal is now zealous and cordial in co-operating with us for the suppression of the slave trade. The mere observance of the treaties might be all that we could require; but it must be obvious that much of the success of those treaties depends upon the cordiality with which they are gone into; and from the recent experience we have had of the conduct of Portugal, I think it is scarcely right of the noble to say that all their cordiality is owing to compulsion. I think that by the removal of governors who were unfavourable to the due execution of the treaty—by the promotion of naval officers who had shown a desire to carry out the treaty—Portugal has shown a desire cordially and freely to concur with us. I trust the House will feel that the position in which I stand in replying to the noble lord, without having had any precise notice of the object of his motion, is one of some difficulty; because the correspondence to which the noble lord has referred was not immediately conducted by myself. Of course upon all material points connected with the Slave-trade, I may be presumed to be informed; but the noble lord has ranged through several volumes of the correspondence, going from one year to another, which makes it difficult for a person who did not himself conduct the correspondence to answer him upon every point. The noble lord has referred again—for I shall dispose of these matters before I come to the main point—the noble lord has referred again to the negroes in Surinam. The noble lord, with his usual complacency, and, perhaps, with a justifiable confidence in his own opinion, says, “It is true that the queen’s advocate has given a legal opinion, but I will venture to say that it is wrong in point of law.” Now, without wishing to undervalue the legal skill of the noble lord, it is clear that the queen’s advocate is the person whom we ought to consult. [Viscount Palmerston: The law-officers of the Crown.] The noble lord says, as both have been consulted, that the law, both of the law-officers and of the queen’s advocate, is wrong. The noble lord must excuse me if, with all due deference to him, I, as a general rule, prefer the opinion of the queen’s advocate upon questions of international law to that of the noble lord. I

stated this the other night when the subject was before mentioned; and I added, that as the noble lord had stated that a number of slaves in Surinam were entitled to their freedom as British subjects, I was determined that no opinion of the queen's advocate, or of any other officer of the Crown, should prejudice the government as to the course they would ultimately take; but I would take care that the grounds of the noble lord's opinion should be well considered before any final resolve was come to; and if, on mature consideration, her Majesty's government saw cause to believe that an erroneous opinion had been given, I was determined that no person should continue to be deprived of that liberty to which he was entitled for the sake of a consistent adherence to such opinion. That promise I have fulfilled, and I have directed that that opinion shall be reconsidered; for I agree that the liberty of man, whether black or white, is far too serious a question to be made dependent upon anything like ministerial consistency; and I say again, that if any opinion that has been given to the government, and upon which the government has acted, disentitling any man to that liberty which he is entitled to claim; so far from thinking it any shame to retract that opinion, I shall be proud to acknowledge the error, and to restore the man so unjustly detained in slavery to freedom. So much as to the case of the negroes of Surinam. Then, as to that of the Imaum of Muscat, and the relations of France with that potentate. I do not deny the right of the noble lord to introduce this subject, neither do I say that it is not important. The noble lord said, at the beginning of his speech, that a treaty was lately entered into between France and the Imaum of Muscat, which enabled France to take the subjects of the Imaum, and consign them to slavery; and he charitably supposes that the reason why France has not extended the operation of the convention recently entered into with England to the eastern coast of Africa, was to enable her to carry on this traffic. Of course it is free to the noble lord to speak of France in what terms he pleases; but he will permit me to say, that I do not think it conduces to the maintenance of amicable relations between this country and France, that he should seize upon every opportunity to speak of that country in such disparaging terms; and in making the statement I am now alluding to, it would have been no more than fair if the noble lord had quoted the whole of the document on which he says it is founded. The noble lord referred to a letter written by the commissioner at the Cape of Good Hope, to show that France had made a treaty with the Imaum of Muscat, to enable her to carry away the subjects of that potentate, and place them in a state of slavery in the island of Bourbon. [An hon. member: In the same state as the Hill Coolies.] But the Hill Coolies we do not admit to be in a state of positive slavery. Great care is taken for their protection, and unless precautions were taken, there would be great danger of abuse. But what is the statement in the letter to which the noble lord has referred? It is to the effect that:—"They had learned that slaves were brought to the island of Bourbon, but that there were no exports of slaves; but they had heard of a French ship of war, the commander of which had concluded a treaty with the Imaum of Muscat, for the purpose of transporting the subjects of the latter as labourers into Bourbon."

I infer the noble lord supposes that to mean to place them in a state of slavery. I do not mean to say that full inquiry ought not to be made whether that arrangement is altogether compatible with our treaties with the Imaum of Muscat; but I think it was only proper that the noble lord should have read the whole of it, when he quoted it to show that France was dooming the persons so transported from the territories of the Imaum, to slavery. The concluding portion of the extract which the noble lord had omitted to read was this—I do not mean to say there might not be more opportunities for abuse in this arrangement than in that under which Hill Coolies are imported into our colonies, nor do I mean to say that the transaction is one that can be justified; but what I say is, that the noble lord, in making the charge, should have read the whole of the document. The letter says:—"Unfortunately, I have not been able to procure a copy of the instrument, but I believe it contains stipulations which take away all pretence for supposing that it involves any infraction of the treaty entered into between England and the Imaum of Muscat."

The noble lord read the first part of the letter, but he altogether overlooked the passage which stated that there were conditions inserted which took away all pretence of any infraction of our treaties. The letter further stated:—"My informant states,

that under the condition of this treaty it is probable that the condition of the labourers so hired will be materially improved, as they are to be sent back after a time with the money they may have earned, and perhaps with the knowledge of some trade, and with habits of industry and civilization which will be of great advantage to them afterwards."

[Viscount Palmerston : I read that, and made a comment on it.] I beg the noble lord's pardon. This part of the letter the noble lord did not advert to, but he referred to the letter generally, and accused us of remissness, because we had not insisted on the observance of our treaties with the Imam of Muscat. I am bound to say it is one evil—compensated for by a superior amount of good no doubt—but it is one evil of the position in which we stand in our relations with other countries in regard to the suppression of the Slave-trade, that it is continually liable to involve us in angry correspondence with those countries. The noble lord says we have shown tameness in our remonstrances. This is one of them, and is a specimen of that tame submission to Spain, and that unwillingness to offend her feelings, which the noble lord says characterizes the policy of the present government. Lord Aberdeen writes to Mr. Bulwer, the British minister at Madrid, thus :—"The bribes which the authorities of Cuba have for many years received for upholding the Slave-trade of that island have been well known, and have been pointed out to the government of Spain, and they have been often urged to put a stop to these iniquities. The precise sum given for each slave, the officers among whom it was divided, and the proportion in which it was shared, were notorious. The Spanish government have not been able to deny those facts, although they have asserted that it has not been from any neglect of duty on the part of the authorities that the Slave-trade was kept up. But it has been proved, that when the government of her Catholic majesty appointed a person of honour and integrity to be governor of Cuba, and one who undertook the high functions entrusted to him with other views than those of enriching himself and his associates by a corrupt connivance at the crimes which he was appointed to repress, that trade speedily declined, and indeed had almost ceased to exist. A change, however, was made in the government of the island, and the iniquitous traffic is again in full vigour, notoriously encouraged, and almost openly defended, by the man to whom her Catholic majesty's government have confided the interests and honour of the colony, and the duty of watching over the faithful discharge of an engagement solemnly entered into by the Crown of Spain. It is for the Spanish government alone to consider what may be the consequences of a perseverance in such conduct on the part of its colonial authorities, so far as the welfare of the colony is concerned. Were it the sole object of her Majesty's government to see the liberation of the slaves in Cuba accomplished, no matter by what means, or at what cost of blood and social order, they could hardly wish a more certain course to be pursued than that which, during the past year, the government at Madrid have permitted, if not sanctioned, in those officers. It is, however, the earnest prayer of her Majesty's government that the fearful catastrophe with which Cuba is threatened may yet be averted. But whatever measures with this view the Spanish government may in its prudence adopt, the flagrant violations of the treaties with Great Britain which are almost daily perpetrated in Cuba, and the equivocations and false statements with which the remonstrances of her Majesty's servants have been met by the representatives of the Spanish Crown, give her Majesty's government the right to require that effectual means shall be taken to put an end to these acts, and to prove that they are not committed under the authority of the government at Madrid. It is the conviction of her Majesty's government, that the honourable observance of the treaty of 1835 is impossible, unless the penal law prescribed by it shall be enacted and enforced, and unless General O'Donnell shall be recalled from the government of Cuba."

That is the remonstrance we made to Spain in regard to the conduct of General O'Donnell. Unfortunately, it often unavoidably happens that the correspondence laid before parliament in reference to the Slave-trade is incomplete. It frequently occurs that the countries with which we are in communication are so distant, that the correspondence upon any particular subject is not concluded at the end of the year, when the papers are made up; and since I came into the House a despatch has been handed to me, written in 1845, on the subject to which the noble lord has spoken, as having been brought in question by General O'Donnell—the right of

our consuls to make representations to the governor of Cuba—and which shows that that subject has not been unattended to by the government. But the communications made in 1845 are not included in the papers before the House, which reach only to the end of 1844; and those papers, taken singly, therefore, give but an imperfect view of the correspondence. And with regard to the case of the slaves in Surinam—that of the Imaum of Muscat—and with regard, also, to the conduct of General O'Donnell, and his charge of improper conduct on the part of our consuls—I repeat that I have only a general knowledge of those transactions; and if, in the absence of the whole of the details, I do not give as full and as satisfactory an answer as may be desired, I trust the House will not suppose we have been neglectful of the honour or the interests of the country, or take up erroneous opinions from the insufficiency of the explanation I am in a condition to give. I now proceed to address myself to what I understand to be the main subject of the noble lord's motion. I never certainly expected that the noble lord would persevere in calling for any expression of opinion on the part of the House upon the policy of her Majesty's government in regard to the recent convention with France; but I did infer from the noble lord's notice, that he intended to bring that subject under the attention of the House, and that that was the main object of his motion. Now, Sir, in the first place, let me say again, that I have no apology to offer on the part of the government in respect to that convention. I believe that convention is a wise and prudent measure, and that it furnishes you with a more efficacious instrument for suppressing the Slave-trade, through the kindly co-operation of France, than you would have had if that convention had never been signed, and your treaties only remained in force. The noble lord has referred in strong terms to the refusal of France to ratify the treaty of 1841 after she had signed it. Is, then, the noble lord of opinion that that refusal on the part of France to ratify, after signing the treaty, was a cause for war? [Viscount Palmerston: No.] The noble lord says he does not consider it a sufficient cause for war; but he tells us that we tamely acquiesced in that refusal to ratify, and that we made no remonstrance to the French government on the subject. Now the noble lord must excuse me for saying, that his statement in this respect is utterly and entirely without foundation. I agree with the noble lord that the refusal to ratify was an act almost unprecedented; and an act calculated to establish a bad precedent for the future. I admit it was an act against which we had a perfect right to remonstrate; but I agree with the noble lord that it was not a cause for war. The question then is, did we protest against that act, and did we remonstrate with the government of France on the subject? The noble lord challenges me to an inquiry, as to what was the cause of the refusal of the executive government of France to ratify. He says the clamour in the French chamber against the ratification was a purely factitious one; and again, though the popular assembly of France in three successive years—in 1842, in 1843, and again in the year 1844—coincided by a unanimous vote in their objection to ratify, and required that efforts should be made by the government to modify the existing convention as to the right of search, the noble lord states that this expression of opinion on the part of the chamber, was nothing more than the clamour of the slave-traders, who were anxious still to be able to carry on the Slave-trade. I have heard the noble lord say that the Slave-trade was extinguished in France—that the subjects of France do not now carry it on. I believe that is the fact; and I do think the noble lord is doing great injustice to the feelings of that country—erroneous and unfounded as I believe that feeling to have been—when he states that the only and the sole ground of their objection, on the part of the French chamber, to the right of search, and the treaty of 1841, repeated, as it had been, during three successive years, was founded on a desire to carry on this infamous traffic. I agree with the noble lord in thinking that the feeling of France against the right of search was unfounded; but I do not concur with him as to the source from which that feeling arose. I believe it arose rather out of the irritated state of the public mind, occasioned by the events in Syria, than out of any desire to carry on the Slave-trade. The noble lord says, that in 1841 I showed a disposition to support the then government in its Syrian policy; and the noble lord has also referred to the cordial aid I gave him in carrying through his measures for suppressing the Slave-trade. The noble lord only does us justice. I was not disposed in 1842 to inquire too minutely as to how the state of things,



which it was the object of the noble lord to meet, had arisen; but having aided him, as he says, in his measures for reforming the difficulties that had occurred, I think it is scarcely fair for the noble lord now to turn round and make that support a matter of charge against me. I will not, as I said, inquire how that feeling in the public mind in France, which led to the non-ratification of the treaty of 1841, arose—not that I want to insinuate any blame to the noble lord—but we found that such a feeling did pervade the public mind, and was expressed on the part of the popular assembly of that country, and that the executive government of France acting, as we believed, honestly and with good faith towards her Majesty's government, did experience a difficulty on account of that popular feeling in ratifying that treaty. I believe it was the desire of the French government honestly and fairly to ratify it, if they could have done so. It would have been inconsistent with their dignity, and with their position, to have sought means to evade the ratification of that treaty. I believe the cause the French government assigned was the real and honest one; and in a country where the executive government is necessarily controlled by the acts and opinions of the popular assembly and popular opinion, they had not the power of performing that which I think they should have performed. The question would have been altered if, having signed the treaty, they had sought the means of escaping by subterfuge its ratification. The question for us to consider was, was the reason given by the French government for the non-ratification an honest one? I believe it was; and though we did right to remonstrate if it had been a case in which a recourse to hostilities would have been justifiable, it still would have been an element in our consideration whether the executive government of France was acting honestly towards this country, or merely assigning a pretence for not ratifying, after having signed, the treaty, in their refusal after the debate in the French chamber. After the signature of the treaty, M. Guizot proposed that the protocols should be left open, and that some modification should be admitted. To this we gave a positive refusal. The noble lord said we tamely acquiesced, and offered no remonstrance. I cannot think that any tameness was evinced, nor could we have stated our objections in stronger terms and plainer terms than we used. Lord Aberdeen, writing to Lord Cowley at Paris, on the 12th of February, 1842, speaking of the non-ratification of the treaty by France, says:—"The consequence of the decision of the French government, if it should be final, appeared to her Majesty's government to be pregnant with mischief, and more injurious to the exercise of the royal prerogative in France than any thing that had occurred of late years; it would shake the confidence of foreign states in the engagements of the French government; and the inconsistency was the more striking, inasmuch as the cabinet of the Tuileries had joined in the invitation to the three other powers to become parties to the treaty."

If the noble lord had penned that remonstrance, could he have communicated it in more emphatic, and at the same time in more dignified language? Unless we should have been justified in taking hostile proceedings, all threats and all menaces were out of the question. We stated that we would not be parties to the transaction, that we would not acquiesce in it, that we thought it dangerous, and we remonstrated against it; but if we did not resort to hostilities any menace would have been unseemly and improper. Lord Aberdeen went on to say—"The proposed alterations in themselves were confessedly of little value—"

For there had been slight concessions proposed with the view of conciliating public feeling in France, and, by means of this conciliation, obtaining the ratification of the treaty.—"The proposed alterations in themselves were confessedly of little value; but they became of weight from their origin and from the motives which led to them; what M. Guizot called national susceptibilities as to calumny and injustice, and which we called unfounded imputations."

Could we have said more? Was there any tameness in this? It was possible that we might have obtained the ratification of the treaty by a sacrifice of something to the wounded honour of France; but we said that "We will make no such concession, we feel that our cause is a just one, and we refuse to make the concession." Lord Aberdeen said—"After the criminations which were made in such an assembly as the Chamber of Deputies of an interested disposition in the course we proposed, if there were only a suspicion entertained, it was impossible they could

long be continued; and if they were the consequence of a hostile feeling, it could not be mitigated by concession." At all events, we could not purchase the ratification by these apparent concessions."

Now, I appeal to the noble lord himself whether, upon the refusal of the French government to ratify the treaty, the grounds on which he stated that we abstained from all remonstrance have not been completely demolished. The French government, however, refused to ratify that treaty; France would not be a party to the treaty in 1841, which she herself had signed. The three other powers which signed that treaty did ratify it; and the treaty was still binding on the four powers who were parties to it. The refusal of France to ratify that treaty left the relations between this country and France, so far as Slave-trade conventions were concerned, dependent upon two conventions—the convention of the year 1831, and the convention of the year 1833. I need not, for the present purpose, allude more particularly to the convention of 1833; it was supplementary to the treaty of 1831; there were important provisions in the convention of 1833, calculated to facilitate the execution of the former treaty; but it did not increase the power within the zones in which the former treaty could be exercised. The treaty of 1831 gave a right of search, which we have been enabled to exercise, which we are now able to exercise, and which we shall be able to exercise, till the recent convention shall come into force. I appeal, however, to the House most strongly, and I shall be able to demonstrate, that the provisions of the recent convention will prove more efficacious for the suppression of the Slave-trade, than a mere adherence to the provisions of the convention of the year 1831. I presume it will be admitted that the right of search is not for itself, and *per se*, a good to this country. I presume it will be admitted that the value of the right of search depends upon its efficacy in the suppression of the Slave-trade. We do not ask for this right as a proof of our maritime supremacy—we do not ask for this right as conferring any advantage on our colonies—we do not ask for it as giving us any triumph over France. The only efficacy in the institution is its power in suppressing the Slave-trade. If we adhere to the right of search, it will not be denied that its exercise is calculated to provoke irritated feelings; and, if we can substitute some other measure which is, at least, as effectual, is there a man in this country who would rigidly insist on maintaining this right of search, and refuse an equivalent? What, then, is the convention of the year 1831? The convention of the year 1831 established a reciprocal right of search between this country and France; but it was not an universal right of search; it was limited, on the west coast of Africa, to that part of the coast which extends from Cape Verd, being, I believe, in about the 15th degree of north latitude, to the 10th degree of south latitude; but that part of the coast was not the whole of the west coast from which the Slave-trade was carried on. The Slave-trade with the Brazils is carried on several degrees to the south of the 10th degree. The right of search, then, was imperfect in this respect, that it was not a reciprocal right of search along the whole west coast of Africa, which is the seat of the Slave-trade. The convention of 1831 gave no right of search on the east coast of Africa. The convention of 1831 did not enable the British cruisers to interfere in the slightest degree with the transhipment of slaves from the territories of the Imam of Muscat. So far as the east coast of Africa is concerned, there was no right of search. I will state fully what the right was. The right extended for twenty degrees round the island of Madagascar, and it did extend also to certain districts on the coasts of Cuba, of Porto Rico, and of the Brazils. Did it, however, stipulate that the French should be bound to keep a certain number of vessels on the coast? No such thing. Warrants authorizing the right of search were to be issued by each country to the vessels of the other; but this country was not allowed to have more than double the number of warrants for French vessels. Now, suppose France should decline to apply for more than four warrants, undoubtedly this would be an evasion of the treaty, unless there were strong grounds; but the treaty was defective in that respect, because it limited the number of our own vessels to double those which France might think fit to keep for this purpose. The treaty, therefore, placed the exercise of the powers under it entirely in the hands of France. It left France to determine the number of vessels which she would keep on the coast, and it precluded us from having more than double the number.

Observe also, that the warrants are to be annually renewable. So that the right was given every year to France to fix, at her discretion, the number of vessels. It is important, in discussing the present treaty, to refer to the correspondence between the noble lord and the French government, at the period when the treaty was made. The noble lord, in the year 1831, asked the French government to consent to an unlimited right of search. The French government positively refused to accede to such a proposition. These were the reasons asserted by the French ministry for that refusal. The noble lord proposed to the French government to concede to this country the exercise of a right of search, which was to be reciprocal to both countries. On the 7th of April, 1831, Count Sebastiani, in answering the proposal conveyed by Lord Granville, said—"The French government had already repeatedly declared its reasons for refusing acquiescence in this proposal, and these reasons had lost none of their weight or importance. The exercise of a right of search in the time of peace was essentially contrary to the principle of the French law, and it would wound public opinion in France on a ground on which it was very sensitive."

The noble lord then directed Lord Granville to furnish the French government with proofs of the great atrocities and cruelties with which the Slave-trade was carried on; and the French government was invited to acquiesce in a qualified right of search. The French government had in that very year passed a law, authorizing the infliction of a punishment, and a very severe punishment, on all French subjects who should be concerned in the Slave-trade. It was admitted by Lord Granville and by the noble lord, that so far as French subjects were concerned, that law would be effectual, and I believe it has been found effectual. The terms in which the noble lord proposed a modified right of search were these:—"His Majesty's government are of opinion that a modified proposition on this subject might be made which would sufficiently accomplish the object in view, without conflicting too much with the prejudices of the French naval service."

He went on, therefore, to instruct Lord Granville as follows:—"You will therefore propose, that instead of establishing a general and permanent right of reciprocal search, that each government shall furnish to the cruisers of the other employed upon the African station, documents or instructions empowering them to search vessels, not being ships of war, within certain degrees of latitude and longitude. These documents might be limited as to duration in time and extension of space. They might be given for three years, subject to renewal at the end of that time, or revocation during that period, should any abuse be found to result from them. It appears to his Majesty's government that this partial and temporary experiment, which would still leave the question of right of search at all times under the control of the two governments, would prove extremely useful, and would either remove objections to a permanent arrangement, or render it unnecessary."

Instead of three years' duration for the warrants as proposed, their duration was limited to one year, thus giving to the French government annually a discretion with respect to the issue of these warrants; and also a power of limiting the number of cruisers employed by the British government, by limiting the number of cruisers which they (the French government) employed. That letter was dated the 7th April, 1831, and on the 30th of April the convention was signed, the period of one year being substituted for three years. The noble lord did, at the same time, make another and very important proposition to the French government. The noble lord now finds it convenient to depreciate the efficacy of the French squadron on the coast of Africa; but the noble lord then urged on the French government, if they would not consent to a general right of search, that they should send cruisers to the coast of Africa to co-operate with us; and these are the terms in which he then spoke of the probable efficacy of that instrument in suppressing the Slave-trade. The noble lord said—"If the objections to the right of search should, unfortunately, prove insurmountable, that then the French government should be pressed strongly for some French ships of war being sent without loss of time to the coast of Africa, to enforce the laws on all vessels bearing the French flag. To this proposition his Majesty's government could not anticipate any objection; with such a squadron his Majesty's ships would be ordered cordially to co-operate; and that there was no reason to doubt that the united efforts of France and England, so exerted, would

accomplish the object to which the two countries had mutually bound themselves by solemn engagements."

Thus the noble lord told the French government that the convention of 1831 was a partial and temporary experiment; and he also told them, that if the French government sent to the coast of Africa a sufficient quantity of cruisers with which our cruisers might co-operate, there was little doubt that, by the means of their joint efforts, the two countries might be enabled to attain the object they had in view. It was such a convention, with such an explanation of motives, that we should have been left with in case no new convention had been formed; and I now proceed to contrast the advantages we have, under the present convention, with those we possessed under the former convention. I admit to the noble lord that we have relinquished, when this new treaty comes into force, the right of search. For what was the right of search efficacious? Was it efficacious for the suppression of the Slave-trade carried on by French ships? I assert that the Slave-trade on the west coast of Africa, carried on by French ships, is at an end. It can be truly asserted, I believe, that French subjects do not carry on the Slave-trade in French ships. If they do, I admit that under this new treaty we lose a power which we had under the convention of 1831; but one of the reasons for adopting this new convention is, that the Slave-trade carried on by the subjects of France, in French ships, is at an end. I make that assertion on these grounds:—According to returns of vessels condemned for carrying on the Slave-trade, furnished by a gentleman with whose name and abilities the noble lord is acquainted (Mr. Rothery), the number of vessels condemned since the year 1819, amounts to no less than 6,398; and of these there are only thirteen which were French vessels, belonging to French subjects, carrying on the Slave-trade. Of these thirteen cases, eleven took place between 1819 and 1831. Since the latter period, only two cases fell within the cognizance of Mr. Rothery, of French vessels carrying on the Slave-trade, and which, under the right of search, we should have been enabled to visit and capture. They were called respectively the *Seugambia* and the *Marie Anne*. The Slave-trade carried on by the French upon the west coast of Africa, then, I contend, is at an end; and I believe that, in speaking of the Portuguese treaty in 1839, the noble lord himself admitted as much. I may add that Mr. Sturge, who recently visited the French colony of Martinique, states that no slaves had been imported there since the accession of his Majesty the present king of the French. I now come to the abuse of the French flag; and I admit that, having abolished the right of search, we ought to be cautious, in order that the French flag may not be abused by being assumed by the vessels of other nations carrying on the Slave-trade. What are the precautions we have got against this abuse? Let us compare the convention of 1845 with the convention of 1831. As I said before, the convention of 1831 was limited to a portion only of the west coast of Africa, where the Slave-trade is carried on. Its operation extended only from Cape Verd to the 10th degree of south latitude; whereas the present convention includes the whole of the west coast of Africa, from Cape Verd to the 16½ degree of south latitude. This includes the whole of the coast where the Slave-trade is carried on; for between the 16th or 17th degree of south latitude and the Cape of Good Hope, there is no opportunity of carrying on that trade. Consequently, there are subject to the operation of this new convention, 6½ degrees of the west coast of Africa more than were subject to the operation of the convention of 1831. What is our protection as to the abuse of the French flag by other parties? Have we conceded that right which we claim of visit, for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not vessels really have the national character which they assume? In this new convention we have it admitted distinctly by the government of France, that that right which the American government was disposed to question, is a right sanctioned by the maritime law of nations. The instructions we have given to our cruisers convey distinct authority to exercise that right of visit; and these instructions are embodied in this convention. They are referred to in the eighth article, and form an essential part in the theory of the whole agreement. There is, therefore, an admission on the part of the French that the cruisers of this country, seeing a ship under French colours, under suspicious circumstances, have a right, unaffected by the convention, of ascertaining the national character of that vessel—[Viscount Palmerston: There is nothing new in that—we had that right

already.] We have thus the means of preventing any abuse of the French flag. Then let us look to the instructions given to the French cruisers. The French law of piracy is even a stricter one than our own. The noble lord spoke of vessels carrying double sets of papers—double commissions from different powers—[Sir C. Napier: Quite a common practice.] The hon. and gallant gentleman says it is quite a common practice. Well, by the French law, it is a piracy. The noble lord has spoken of a suspicious ship, not being a French vessel, but carrying French colours: our right of visit, in such a case, is admitted by France. It is a right that we have long claimed, but which is only now formally admitted; and the noble lord knows well that to claim is one thing, and to have admitted is quite another. What are the French instructions given to the French officers? They are similar to those given to the British officers. They authorize French officers, seeing a vessel bearing a flag under suspicious circumstances, to board it, and ascertain its national character. But the French instructions go further, and declare that persons engaged in the Slave-trade are, generally speaking, persons who commit an act of piracy; they state that by the French law, it is piracy for persons to commit depredations from armed vessels, to have double sets of papers, &c. The French instructions, therefore, authorize the French officers to apply their law of piracy to the act of slavers. We are to have, under this new convention, a joint force belonging to the two nations, amounting to not less than fifty-two vessels, and they are to act in accordance with such instructions as I have explained. I quite admit that the French cruisers will not have the same power as the British cruisers, as they have not the right of search with the countries chiefly carrying on the Slave-trade—Brazil and Spain. Still the French cruisers had before no right of search over Brazilian, Spanish, or Portuguese vessels, and therefore they now stand, in this respect, in no worse situation than heretofore; but as far as the abuse of the French flag is concerned, will not the assistance of twenty-six French cruisers, co-operating with us, provide an effectual precaution against the assumption of the French flag by the slavers of other countries? The noble lord says, that he cordially approves of those parts of the new convention which propose that treaties should be entered into between the commanders of the squadrons with the native princes, in order to enable them to destroy the baracoons, and to prevent the carrying on, upon shore, of the Slave-trade. When these treaties shall have been formed, the French cruisers will be enabled to give most material aid to our cruisers in carrying them into effect. Is it not a fact, with respect to the suppression of the Slave-trade, that the whole burden and expense has fallen on this country? And what is the noble lord's own account? Has he not stated that the reason we failed is the not having a sufficient force on the coast of Africa? He said that events are constantly occurring which compel us to diminish our force on the coast of Africa; and, during the diminution of the force, an encouragement and a stimulus are given to the trade. Surely, the addition of twenty-six vessels in aid of our squadron will supply that deficiency; fifty-two vessels being the minimum of the joint force to be placed on the coast of Africa. The noble lord said, that during the Chinese war, during the dispute of New Grenada, and again when it was thought necessary by the present government to send a force to the river Plata, we removed vessels from the coast of Africa, and that, during their removal, the efforts made for the suppression of the Slave-trade were ineffectual. Well, then, against this evil we have taken the precaution in this new treaty with France of providing that France shall bear one-half of the burden in suppressing the slave-trade, and that there shall never be less than fifty-two vessels engaged in blockading the coast of Africa, whilst the commanders shall endeavour to form treaties with the native princes. Having formed those treaties, and having then the right, under the law of nations, to interfere, the commanders will be able to give effect to them by the joint and cordial co-operation of the two greatest maritime powers in Europe. The noble lord asked me some questions as to particular articles of the treaty lately concluded. He began with the preamble. The noble lord stated, that the preamble of the treaty of 1845 was most disgraceful to this country, because it began with this recital—"Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and his Majesty the King of the French, considering that the Conventions of the 30th of November, 1831, and the 22nd of March, 1833, have effected their object in preventing the use of English and French flags in carrying on the Slave-trade, but that this odious traffic still

exists, and that the said conventions are insufficient to ensure its complete suppression, his Majesty the King of the French having expressed his desire to adopt more effectual measures for the suppression of the Slave-trade than those contemplated in the said Conventions; and her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland being anxious to co-operate for the attainment of this object, they have agreed to conclude a new Convention."

The noble lord says it is disgraceful to admit that the existence of these Conventions have not had the effect of suppressing the Slave-trade. Now, it would be rather difficult to insert and put on record that France had carried on the Slave-trade, and that we had not. It would be a difficult matter to draw that distinction. But what does the noble lord say to his own Convention of 1831? Why, the noble lord, in that year, knowing that no efficacious measures were required for the suppression of the Slave-trade carried on by British subjects, committed precisely the same error, if it be an error, which we are charged with having fallen into in 1845. In fact, the noble lord, by the wording of his own preamble, made it difficult for us to use different language from that employed by him in 1831. The Convention of 1831 was not required for the suppression of the Slave-trade carried on by British subjects. That had already been abolished and put an end to by law; but notwithstanding such being the case, the noble lord had, in treating with another country, thought it courteous to place the common object upon the same footing. In the preamble of the Convention of 1831, he states that the countries of Great Britain and France, being desirous of rendering more effectual the means of suppression hitherto in force against the criminal traffic in slaves, have deemed it expedient to negotiate and conclude a Convention for the attainment of so salutary an object. The preamble was thus couched, and the Convention which it began went on to state, that therefore mutual right of search was conceded, such right being necessary for the suppression of the Slave-trade. Then the noble lord put a question to me as to the meaning of the third article of the Convention, to which he seems to attach great importance. The noble lord is particularly desirous that I should explain the meaning of it. Now, I think I can explain it to his entire satisfaction. The noble lord asks whether the object of the third article is to prevent British commercial vessels from plying in certain harbours? The third article provides that certain stations shall be selected and defined, and "That the care thereof shall be committed to English and French cruisers, jointly or separately, as may be deemed most expedient, provided always, that in case of a station being especially committed to the charge of cruisers of either nation, the cruisers of the other nation may, at any time, enter the same for the purpose of exercising the rights respectively belonging to them for the suppression of the Slave-trade."

Now, I will tell the noble lord what the object of that article is, and I anticipate his entire approval of its insertion. It will be desirable to assign those stations to France nearest her own possessions, and to give to British cruisers the same advantage; but it is necessary to stipulate that we should have the right of entering the French stations, because we have more efficacious means of suppressing the Slave-trade than France. It may happen that on the stations assigned to French cruisers, Spanish, Portuguese, or Brazilian slave-ships may enter, which the cruisers of France have not the power to search. We have that power. It became necessary therefore to stipulate that, though different stations should be primarily assigned to the cruisers of the two powers, yet the assignation of a particular station to the French cruisers is not to prevent our cruisers, who have superior power, from entering on those stations, in order, if necessary, that the right of search should be exercised by us as to vessels over which the French have no corresponding power. Now, I trust I have explained that article in a way which will be satisfactory to the noble lord, and have shown him that the reservation was not intended to interfere with the pursuits of legitimate commerce, but only to enable us (after certain stations were assigned to the cruisers of each nation) to have full power of entering the stations of the other power, for the purpose of putting in force our superior powers. I am not aware that any other question was mooted by the noble lord in connection with the treaty. [Viscount Palmerston: The ninth article.] That is a mere formal engagement, that neither power will, under any circumstances, be concerned in the Slave-trade. Now, supposing the noble lord's suspicions to be just as to the Imaum of Muscat, this becomes by no means an immaterial portion of the Convention.

The noble lord has been engaged in showing that France has been carrying on the Slave-trade, and yet he objects to a public engagement that each country shall within its own territories—within the colonies it now possesses, or may hereafter possess—enter into a reciprocal stipulation that, under no circumstances, shall the Slave-trade be carried on. I admit with regard to us—I trust with respect to France—such a stipulation is perfectly unnecessary; but if I doubted the policy of inserting it in the Convention, the speech of the noble lord would go far to convince me that it was neither needless nor superfluous. But I suppose the noble lord will not contend that it would be possible to exact such a stipulation from France, and yet that we should not be prepared to enter into a corresponding engagement. So far from implying any dishonour to this country, I think, if there is any well-grounded suspicion that the Slave-trade may be carried on in any part of the dominions of France, temporary or permanent, that a great public object is gained, if we obtain the admission of a positive engagement, that under no circumstances shall the Slave-trade be carried on—that the carrying it on shall not be merely the infraction of the municipal law, but of a positive stipulation entered into with this country. I, therefore, contend that we have, under the new Convention, increased the means of suppressing the Slave-trade beyond those which could be exercised under the old treaty. We have got this Convention with the cordial good-will of France. We have assurances of its cordial co-operation, which we never should have had under the old treaty. The provisions of this treaty regard a more extended line of coast than that under the old; but add to that the consideration that these provisions are entered into with the cordial good-will, and are to be carried into effect with the cordial concert and co-operation, of France; then (giving due weight to this consideration) we have an instrument for the suppression of the Slave-trade more powerful and available than we should have had under the defective instrument of 1831. The noble lord has asked me for the evidence taken before this Convention. The noble lord treats with utter disregard the statement I made, that I could not produce that evidence with a due regard to the interest of the public service. The noble lord has often given a similar refusal; and I never treated his declaration with that disregard which he exercises towards me. I do assure him, that I have no motive whatever in withholding that evidence on account of the supposed importance it might show was attached to the right of search. But this evidence was given by eight officers, English and French, who were examined before the Convention with regard to the measures it would be wise to adopt on the coast of Africa; as to the particular parts of the coast where the cruisers of the two countries should be stationed, and where the trade was most carried on; the nature of the engagements it might be desirable to enter into with native powers; the mode of carrying them into effect, and the secrecy necessary to be observed; and these being mainly and principally the matters to which that evidence refers, I cannot, consistently with the interest of the public service, consent to produce it. Therefore it is that I feel compelled by a performance of my duty, and not from the unworthy motives which the noble lord chooses to attribute to me, to adhere to the refusal which I gave in answer to a question of the noble lord, and to withhold from the knowledge of the public the evidence given by the officers who were examined. If the noble lord thinks that any object can be gained by giving the names of the officers, I have not the slightest hesitation in stating them. There were five English and three French officers engaged in this investigation, and I am bound to say that the evidence they gave was not the foundation of this treaty, for their evidence mainly referred to particulars with respect to which I adhere to the opinion, that it would be inconsistent with my duty to present them to the House. Now, I entreat the House to bear in mind—if you want authority on the subject—who were the parties to whom the consideration of this question was committed, and by whom this convention was signed. There were two men standing in their respective countries in the highest rank among public men for ability, for integrity, for high private character; but, above all, they were distinguished from most men on this account, that they have throughout their lives been remarkable for persevering and vigorous efforts, at any sacrifice, to combat and control the detestable traffic carried on in the blood of our fellow men. The two men who considered this question, and signed this convention, have been influenced by no party or political considerations. Dr. Lushington, during the time he acted in

public life, was opposed to the views of her Majesty's present government. The Duc de Broglie has for a long period separated himself from party in France, and has never shown the slightest desire to sacrifice his private opinions to any party. The Duc de Broglie, if any man, had an interest in maintaining the convention of '33. It was during his occupation of the foreign department that the treaty of '33, entered upon for the purpose of giving effect to that of 1831, was signed. If the Duc de Broglie has been remarkable for any act of interference in public or political matters of late years, it has been with reference to the cause of education in his own country, or to the suppression of the Slave-trade. During the whole of his political life, opposed to her Majesty's government, Dr. Lushington has been chiefly remarkable (more so than any man now living, and ranking in this respect with Clarkson, Wilberforce, and the late Sir F. Buxton), for his successful efforts to mitigate the hard lot of the slave, and to prevent the continuance of the abominable traffic of the Slave-trade. These two men signed that convention, which no earthly consideration would have induced them to sign, but the firm persuasion that they were placing in the hands of their respective governments more powerful means of suppressing the Slave-trade than any which previously existed. This convention comes recommended to this House, so far as authority is concerned, by the highest authorities by which it could be stamped. It comes recommended to the House by the application of reason, by contrasting its provisions with those of preceding treaties; it comes recommended still more powerfully by this consideration, that you have every assurance that in carrying into effect its provisions, you will have the cordial concert and co-operation of the most powerful maritime power of Europe next to our own; whereas, if you choose to rely, instead of this convention, on the letter of the treaty of 1831, depend on it you will not have that cordial co-operation which is the life and soul of engagements of this kind. You have a right to hold France to the literal execution of that treaty; but, in my opinion, the example of France, the concert and co-operation between France and England, will add weight and effect to the practical execution of measures for the intended suppression of the Slave-trade, which you will look for in vain to the letter of the treaty; if the feeling of a great nation, if the feeling of its legislature, if the feeling of the public mind, runs counter to it; if it throws its sympathy, not on the side of those who desire the suppression of the slave-trade, but of those by whom it is carried on; if it mingles up some feeling of national pride and honour in resisting the right of search, you may claim and execute that treaty. But I look forward with more confidence to the cordial and harmonious concert of the two countries, than to the letter of engagements opposed to the general feeling of one of the contracting parties, which, though they may be strictly and honourably carried into effect, I believe, in the present feeling of France, cannot be enforced in that spirit and temper which can alone give effect to engagements of this kind.

Motion negatived.

## NEW ZEALAND.

JULY 23, 1845.

In the debate on Mr. C. Buller's motion,—"That this House regards with regret and apprehension the state of affairs in New Zealand; and that those feelings are greatly aggravated by the want of any sufficient evidence of a change, in the policy, which has led to such disastrous results."

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: Sir, before I make any observations on the particular motion which has been brought forward by the hon. member for Liskeard, I wish, in order that the current of those observations may not be interrupted, and that I may not omit to do justice to those whose names I am about to introduce—I wish, in the first place, to make one or two remarks which have a bearing on the character and conduct of individuals. Sir, I must express my deep regret that, in the course of this debate, reflections have been made on the character of the hon. gentleman who fills the situation of Under Secretary in the Colonial Office. That regret would be increased, if it had not been for the honourable and ample testimony to his merits which was borne by a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Labouchere,) perfectly capable of



appreciating those merits, from his having served in the same department with Mr. Stephen. Mr. Stephen has the honour of being closely connected by birth with two men who have left names which will long be memorable in the annals of this country. He is the son of a gentleman of great distinction, and he is the nephew of Mr. Wilberforce. It seems, however, as if that illustrious connection operated, not as an advantage, but as a prejudice against him. Now, I have had but little personal communication with Mr. Stephen, but I believe that a situation in a public office was never occupied by a man of higher integrity, of more disinterested views—of greater assiduity—of more profound knowledge—and of more distinguished acquirements than Mr. Stephen. [Mr. Roebuck: I said nothing against the acquirements or the character of Mr. Stephen.] The hon. and learned gentleman said nothing against the private character of Mr. Stephen; but he said that the prejudices of Mr. Stephen might have influenced the proceedings of the Colonial Office. Now, I believe that the allegations respecting the prejudices of Mr. Stephen are totally unfounded. I believe him to be most willing to render every assistance in his power to his superiors in office; but I also believe that he never attempts to influence their conduct. I believe that he is wholly free from any connection with the missionary party; and if he had any connection with them, I have that confidence in his integrity and high-mindedness which makes me perfectly certain that that circumstance would not influence him in the discharge of his duties. I believe that the people of this country know little of the real merits of Mr. Stephen; but I am persuaded that the time will come when justice will be done to his distinguished services. His labours are now unostentatious; but the time will arrive when this country will know what is the extent of the knowledge which Mr. Stephen possesses, how that knowledge has been made conducive to the public interest, and what have been the integrity and the high principles by which his conduct has been uniformly actuated. I have thought it right, having a personal knowledge of Mr. Stephen, and seeing that prejudices have occasionally risen in the public mind with respect to Mr. Stephen, and that erroneous impressions are entertained with respect to his influence—I have thought it right not to allow this debate to proceed further, without doing what I could to remove those unfounded opinions. I know that Mr. Stephen feels most severely the unfounded imputation directed against him. He has expressed his willingness to relinquish his connection with the Colonial Office; but such is the high sense of his merits entertained, not merely by this government, but by successive administrations, that it is our wish, as it has been their wish, that he should on no account relinquish the position which he holds, but that he should continue to give the public the great value of his services. There is another individual who has been alluded to, and to whom I wish to do justice; I mean that gallant officer Mr. Robertson, to whom the gallant commodore has referred. The scene on which that gallant officer performed his services is a very distant one; and the services themselves may not have cast around them that eminence and distinction which sometimes attend services not more important; but I think it is for the public interest that, although the scene was a distant one, and although the numbers engaged in the conflict were comparatively small—I think it is for the public interest that we should show in the House of Commons that the distance of the scene and the comparative unimportance of the conflict do not make us oblivious of rare merit. Sir, I must say that his conduct stands forward in honourable contrast with the conduct of others concerned on that occasion; and I rejoice to find a British officer, not thinking whether his ship was to be surprised by a parcel of savages, but leaving that ship and setting on shore that gallant example which so many officers of our navy have before set, and rallying round him, until he was wounded, the flagging spirits of the civilians. And here I wish to make it known in the House of Commons that that conduct shall not pass unrewarded. In justice to him, and as an encouragement to others, that conduct shall receive its reward by the earliest opportunity being taken to give to him that promotion to which he is so eminently entitled. And now, Sir, I come to the particular motion which is the subject of consideration to-night. The hon. gentleman admits that it is incumbent on those who bring forward the motion to assign good and sufficient reasons for its introduction. Sir, I certainly do think, that in the present state of New Zealand, and after the recent discussion which has taken place upon the subject, there ought to be some

good and sufficient reasons assigned for again calling the attention of the House to the question, and for incurring the risk of widening the differences that have unfortunately prevailed between the authorities of this country to whom the management of the affairs of New Zealand is committed, and probably must continue to be committed. I think that those who are interested in the welfare of New Zealand ought rather to show an anxiety to forget the differences that have prevailed, and the controversies that have taken place; and that they ought studiously to avoid—unless they have some good and sufficient reasons to assign for such a course, that they ought studiously to avoid having recourse to any proceeding which could tend to embitter those differences, and to throw difficulty in the way of an harmonious concert and co-operation on the part of the authorities to whom I am referring. The hon. gentleman admits that the unfortunate events which have recently taken place in New Zealand, in themselves constitute no reason for this motion. The hon. gentleman even admits that in the present state of New Zealand the unfortunate conflict which has lately taken place, and its probable consequences, should operate as a discouragement to a renewed discussion, rather than as an incentive to it. Well, but the hon. gentleman also says, "I will assign to you the real reason for this motion." Now, I trust that the House will bear with me while I examine whether or not that reason is well-founded. If it be not well founded, I think the hon. gentleman who has made this motion has incurred a great responsibility. I do not deny his perfect right to make an appeal to the House of Commons. He has a constitutional right to make that appeal, whatever may be the consequences; but I think that if the object of the hon. gentleman be to promote the welfare of New Zealand, prudential considerations ought to have prevented him from exercising that undoubted constitutional right. Sir, the only ground that can be assigned for this motion—and it is avowed to be the only ground—is, that language was held by me and by my right hon. friend, in the course of the last debate, which is at variance with the course we have since pursued. I am, indeed, acquitted of the intention of endeavouring to gain a majority by holding out delusive hopes. The hon. gentleman does not attribute that to me. He says, however, that the language which I used had that effect, and that members were induced to vote with the government, or at least not to vote against them, because they had relied on the declarations made by my right hon. friend and myself. He also says that the course we have since pursued is at variance with our declarations. Now, I propose to inquire whether it is or not. I am not about to relieve the hon. gentleman from the necessity of dividing; but I am about to vindicate and to defend myself and my right hon. friend from accusations which I believe to be unjust. I shall, however, confine myself on this occasion to the duty of vindication; and I do not mean to enter into criminatory attacks on the New Zealand Company. I shall not revive past differences; but I shall rather bear in mind that the New Zealand Company still continues a company, and that it is desirable for the public interest that there should be a co-operation between that company and the government. I retain the opinions which I expressed on a former evening; but I shall endeavour to show that those opinions are in precise conformity with the course I have since taken, and that there is not therefore a pretence for this renewed appeal to the House. The hon. gentleman the member for Liskeard said, that he would not refer to any particular expressions I used in the speech I formerly delivered, but that he would rather allude to the general tone and spirit in which that speech was conceived. Sir, it was purposely conceived in a conciliatory spirit, and I purposely avoided any reference to past differences between the Colonial Office and the New Zealand Company. I wished to promote by the language I held and the spirit in which I spoke—I wished to promote the prospect of an early and a satisfactory settlement of disputes which cannot be prolonged without serious prejudice to the public service. But every word of the letter which I addressed to my noble friend (Lord Ingestre), the chairman of the New Zealand committee—every word of that letter I am prepared to maintain; and if the hon. gentleman thinks that the only mode in which we can avoid a record of hostile opinions upon this question is a statement on my part of a departure from the terms of that letter, such a statement I must tell him I am not prepared to make. I adhere to that letter; I say that I will not supersede my noble friend in the conduct

of the Colonial Office, I say that in the opinions of my noble friend I concur, and that I believe my noble friend to be influenced by a sincere desire to promote the welfare of the New Zealand Company, as far as he can promote it consistently with his duty to the Crown, and with good faith towards others. Those are the opinions which I expressed in that letter; and those are the opinions which I still entertain. The hon. gentleman says—"Then do you mean to imply an approbation of the whole of the past correspondence?" That is not the point at issue. The question now is, whether the correspondence which has taken place since that speech was delivered, is at variance with the declarations I then made? That is the question, and the only question I have now to discuss. We have nothing now to do with the controversies of the years 1842 and 1843. I purposely abstain from noticing them; and as the objects of the government are to consult the interests of that colony, to lay the foundations of peace, and to consider how the British sovereignty can be maintained there in the best and most effectual manner, I think I should be acting most unworthily by noticing past disputes, and attempting to criminate any members of the company. I do not mean to pursue such a course; and I shall confine myself to this question—whether there be any thing in the communications which have appeared between the head of the Colonial Office and the New Zealand Company which is in the slightest degree at variance with the assurance that I gave, and the declarations that I made, not on my part merely but in full concert, and after communicating with my noble friend. Let us look, then, to the general tone and spirit of the observations which I made; for I admit that the tone and spirit in which a minister speaks is the best indication of the *animus* and the intentions of a government. Well, I spoke in a conciliatory spirit; but has my noble friend acted in any other? Did he show any indisposition to receive a deputation from the New Zealand Company? Immediately after the debate was closed—after the reflections that were thrown upon my noble friend—and after the imputations so liberally dealt on his conduct, he of course not having an opportunity to reply to them—I do not mean to say that that is any reason why they should not have been made—but after he had had an opportunity of reading those imputations, without having had an opportunity of replying to them did my noble friend show any indisposition to enter at once, three nights after the close of that debate, into friendly communication with the chosen deputies of the New Zealand Company, who were sent to confer with him? In order that such mistakes as had before occurred might not again occur, it was suggested that there should be minutes taken of the conversation, and that these minutes should be considered as records of what took place. Now, then, with respect to the tone and spirit of my noble friend. My noble friend had read to the deputation portions of the despatches he had just written; and in what terms were these despatches conceived? Alluding to the New Zealand company and to their claim for land, my noble friend writes as follows to Captain Grey:—"In my despatch of the 13th instant, I adverted to the relations between her Majesty's government and the New Zealand Company. An early settlement of the pending question respecting the company's claim to certain lands is of paramount importance towards an amicable adjustment of the affairs of the colony; and it is far more necessary to take effectual steps for bringing that question to a final, and, if possible, a satisfactory conclusion, than to discuss questions of strict right, or to carry on an unprofitable controversy."

Now, what could a minister say more? The hon. gentleman opposite says, "I advise you to select an agent, to give him a general discretionary authority, and not to bind him down by particular instructions." What course has my noble friend taken? He has appointed Captain Grey. But the hon. and learned gentleman says, he thinks it would have been better to have taken a person of high rank from this country for that purpose. Now, the selection of Captain Grey was a most disinterested act. It was possible, if we had selected some person in England, and had given him a large salary, that we should have been charged with having converted this affair into a matter of patronage, and should have been reproached for not having appointed a gentleman, such as Captain Grey, who was at New South Wales, and, therefore, close at hand, and who was conversant with the interests of New Zealand, and not a stranger; and the expression would have been, "For God's sake,

why not send Captain Grey?" If we are wrong in this—in thus sending Captain Grey—at least we have acted from no other motive than to settle the affairs of New Zealand in the speediest possible space of time. My noble friend said, "Don't let us refer to the past, but let us bring the affair to a speedy and satisfactory settlement." But how does he conclude his despatch to Captain Grey? He says,—“I can only repeat the instructions which I have already given to Captain Fitzroy, to endeavour, by amicable co-operation with Colonel Wakefield, to remove obstacles arising from unsatisfied native claims, and to discourage, as far as lies in your power, any exorbitant or extortionate demands on the company on this head.”

These are the general instructions which my noble friend has given to Captain Grey, and these instructions have been communicated frankly and unreservedly to the New Zealand Company. So much, then, for the general spirit of my speech. Now, with respect to the particular facts. The hon. and learned gentleman says, I made declarations with respect to the future government of New Zealand which were at variance with the instructions given by my noble friend. [Mr. C. Buller: I never said that. What I said was, that those declarations had never been carried out.] Well, which are not carried out in the instructions. This is the main point between us. The hon. member says that I, speaking in the House of Commons, and influencing it by my declaration, gave an assurance here which my noble friend, writing a few days afterwards, did not substantially carry out. What did I say? I said generally that I thought, with regard to these distant colonies, a representative government was on the whole the best mode of conducting them; that I thought this country could have no object in possessing these colonies, except to see them contented and prosperous; and that on the whole the best way of ensuring contentment and prosperity, as a general rule, was to establish a form of government in accordance with the views of the inhabitants. But I said that in the present state of society in New Zealand, looking at the dispersion of its inhabitants, and the distance of its settlements from each other, I thought it would be exceedingly difficult at once to give effect to the principle of representative government, if, by representative government you mean a popular assembly with extensive powers of general legislation and taxation. But the particular declaration which I made was this:—I said, it is quite clear that, seeing how the settlers are spread over the Northern Island, it would be no easy matter to apply the principle of representative government according to the rule observed in more thickly-peopled countries; that I believe by far the best plan would be the formation of municipal institutions, with extensive powers of local taxation for local purposes. I said that I thought these municipal institutions might be the germ of future representative government; that I hoped such would be the case, but that the colony was not now in a condition for a representative government in the sense in which we usually apply that word; but that I thought the best foundation for a future representative government would be the formation of municipal institutions, with extensive powers of local taxation for local purposes. That is the declaration which I made. What did my noble friend write to Captain Grey? He says,—“There is another subject to which your attention will probably be directed, namely, that of a representative government in New Zealand. By a representative government, I mean the constitution of a legislative assembly with general power of legislation. I should be very glad if I could think it practicable in the present condition of the colony to adopt this course: but the objections appear to me insuperable.”

Here my noble friend admits that he thinks the principle of representative government good, and regrets only that the circumstances of New Zealand prevent, for the present, its application. He says there are, above others, reasons which have reference to the distance of the settlements from each other, and the peculiar position of the native population; and, he says, “For these, among other reasons, I think the admission of the representative system for the present impracticable;” and my noble friend then requests Captain Grey to direct his attention and that of the colonists to the formation of local municipal bodies, with considerable powers of taxation for local purposes, and with the power of making the necessary by-laws, leaving the more general powers of legislation vested in the council as at present constituted. Looking at the peculiar circumstances of New Zealand, he continues.—“I should not object to extend the authority of these local bodies over a considerable district of the surrounding country.”

He stated, and I think the House will concur with him, that he wished to see these districts so extended as to take in a portion of the native population; but not in such numbers as to enable them in their present unenlightened state, by physical force, and by the force of numbers, to overbear the intelligent portion of the inhabitants; but to accustom them to the former, and privileges of representative government, and municipal institutions, by incorporating them, as far as you can, in these institutions, and by giving them equal privileges, and making them bear equal burdens. Does the House object to that? My noble friend also stated his opinion, that in these bodies it would be found advisable to limit, as far as possible, so much of the burthen of the government expenditure as could fairly be considered of a local character, to the particular district, thus obviating the objections which might be urged by the inhabitants of distant districts, that they were taxed for the purpose of meeting expenditure in which they had no concern, and from which they derived no benefit. What, then, were the instructions of my noble friend? That these institutions should have all the control over local taxation and expenditure which is compatible with the due exercise of the functions of the governing body. It is impossible that they should have supreme power. You must put some limitation, because you do not wish to have separate bodies with supreme powers. You do not wish to have one system of custom-house regulations in one settlement, and another system in another. You do not wish, I presume, to have one law for the succession to property in one part of the colony, and another law in another. You do not wish to establish the law of primogeniture in one district, and destroy it in another. You want now and for ever to have one controlling supreme body, to whom the general powers of legislation must be entrusted. You wish to have one general body to whom general taxation for the support of the government and the charge of the state shall be committed. That, I apprehend, is inevitable; but, in the mean time, constitute municipal institutions, widen the range of their authority, and commit to them as extensive powers, both of taxation and control, as is consistent with the authority of the supreme legislative body. How are these municipal bodies now constituted? I apprehend on as liberal a basis as any one would wish. I believe every male having arrived at the age of twenty-one years is entitled to vote. [Mr. Aglionby: That is not the case yet.] But a local law has passed regulating the franchise, and conferring it on every male inhabitant of the age of twenty-one. No one wants a more liberal constitution of municipal bodies than this. But the powers of taxation were limited; they were limited within far too narrow bounds. The hon. and learned member says, these institutions give powers which are only sufficient for paving and lighting; and he asks whether such powers are suitable for colonies in the position of New Zealand. Most certainly not. I will not define what local purposes are; but when you constitute these municipal institutions, you ought to constitute them on a liberal basis as to the franchise, with authority over as extensive districts as you can. You ought to secure to them every power of local taxation, with all the control over local expenditure which is compatible with the functions and authority of the supreme government—namely, the governor in council, as at present constituted. Sir, I apprehend that, in speaking of the existing constitution and members of the council, I am not to be understood as implying that for all time to come seven members, four of them holding office and three not holding office, according to the instructions of my noble friend—I mean the instructions given by the noble lord who formerly held my noble friend's office—instructions no doubt perfectly well suited to the state of society as it then existed—when I say that I think these municipal institutions will form the germ of a representative government—if you say that for all time to come this council is to remain unchanged, I admit that such is not the germ of the representative government which I desire to see. But when you have municipal institutions it will be perfectly open to consideration whether you may not give a more extended and liberal character to the council. Such is the spirit in which my noble friend's instructions are conceived. How you are to constitute the council I do not say; that, of course, must be an element for your consideration; but after you have constituted these bodies on extended and liberal representative principles—after you have committed to them powers of local taxation, my belief is, that it will be necessary to reconsider the constitution of the council.

and give it a power more consentaneous with municipal institutions. But what possible object can we have in so modifying the council as to disentitle it to the confidence of those for whom it is to legislate? I think I have given a satisfactory explanation of the intention of my noble friend. If the New Zealand Company had any objections to urge, why did they not state them? But not a word of objection was sent; and now this motion is made in the House of Commons, and now, for the first time, these objections are brought forward. These were the intentions of my noble friend in sending out these instructions; and I think it utterly impossible that any man, in the present state of the colony, could have given more precise or more positive instructions. Instructions have been given which I could not, consistently with a sense of public duty, lay on the table of the House. I could not run the risk of their being made known in the colony before the arrival of the governor; but the time will come when these instructions will be laid on the table, and the House will then have an opportunity of seeing whether the imputations cast on my noble friend with regard to his conduct towards the New Zealand Company are well founded or not. I speak under great difficulty in this respect, because the same objections apply now, as then, with regard to the production of those papers. There are also despatches to Captain Fitzroy; but having removed him from office, we do not think it right to present them. These despatches, however, explicitly state on the part of my noble friend the objections entertained with regard to his conduct, and the grounds upon which he felt called upon to advise his recall. These instructions will be in the hands of Captain Grey, and will serve as an indication to him of the policy of my noble friend. I hope I have proved to the satisfaction of the House that I did not say one word with respect to the representative government, or the formation of municipal institutions, in which the instructions of my noble friend do not both in the spirit and in the letter concur. I hope I have shown, that far from attempting to gain a majority by delusive assurances, I said not one word which has not been literally carried into execution by the instructions of my noble friend. With respect to Auckland, I stated that, deterred by general considerations, I was not prepared to give any assurance that the seat of government should be transferred from thence. My noble friend has given instructions with regard to Auckland in precise conformity with my declaration. With regard to the relation between the New Zealand Company and the government, did I give any assurance at variance with the opinions expressed by my right hon. friend? Did I say that the treaty of Waitangi was not to be respected? What language did I hold with respect to that? I said, distinctly, that if the House affirmed that the treaty of Waitangi enabled the Crown to dispossess the natives of all their land without full inquiry, they would, in my opinion, lower the character of this House in the estimation of all who respect the inviolability of public engagements. I said I thought nothing could be more unjust than if the House were to pass censure, or implied censure, on the conduct of my noble friend, because he avowed his determination to carry honourably into effect the treaty which had been made with the natives of New Zealand at Waitangi. I believe this is the point, and almost the only point, on which we are at issue. I believe that, after all the volumes of controversy which have appeared, the question really resolves itself into this; shall the government undertake to guarantee, in this country, within certain limits in New Zealand, a certain amount of land, without reference to the rights to that land vesting in the natives? ["No, no!"] If you mean to say that the Crown shall do all it can to possess the company, through the intervention of local authorities, of that quantity of land to which they were entitled by the award of Mr. Pennington—if you say that the government should give a liberal construction to the claims of the company—that it should not remain indifferent—that it should exert itself by all legitimate means at the earliest possible period to enable the company to obtain by legitimate means all the land they claim—if that be your meaning, there is no difference between us. But this I tell you distinctly we will not do; and if the House entertains a different opinion, it is but right that it should give expression to it. We will not undertake, in the absence of surveys and local information as to the claims of the natives, to assign to you 1,000,000 or any other number of acres, and dispossess the natives by the sword. [Mr. Aglionby: Nobody ever asked that.] I admit that the New Zealand Company has a fair

right to expect from the Crown to be put in possession of the quantity of land awarded to them, at as early a period and in as satisfactory a manner as possible, with this clear reserve, that you shall not violate a compact, or infringe the rights of private property. I say this entirely differing from the policy which dictated the course pursued in 1839, which I regard as a serious error. You should have rested your claim on the ground of discovery, and not on some cession by the natives. Acting on the report of the aborigines' committee, you laid down a principle which has involved you in your present difficulty; and now you are trying to make us responsible for it. The hardness of the names connected with the subject indispose people to pay attention to it; but if you will listen but for a quarter of an hour, I will show that this difficulty is all of your own creating, and that if you seek to involve my noble friend in censure for not violating this treaty, you will commit an act of gross injustice towards him. The construction of these treaties depends on the circumstances of the time when they were formed, the impression entertained by the executive governments and the legislative assemblies, and on the language which you instructed your representative to hold. It may be all very well to say this treaty was an improvident one, let us get possession of the land; but I tell you there are parties in New Zealand enemies to your authority, who know what passed in 1839, and the circumstances under which the British sovereignty was then established. I ask you to beware—first, from considerations of justice, and next by considerations of policy—how you take upon yourselves the responsibility of violating the engagements into which you have entered. I agree with the hon. member for Bath, that the title derived from cession by the natives was unwise, liable to misconception, and, above all, that it is extremely difficult to show a right of sovereignty in this way unless you had the unanimous consent of the natives. But you must bear in mind what passed in 1839. Lord Normanby was then at the head of the Colonial Office. He sent out a certain naval officer named Hobson, entrusted him with diplomatic and executive functions, and gave him instructions. Will you tell me what those instructions were? I will read the words which a Secretary of State, six years ago, speaking in the name of the Crown, gave to an officer sent to represent her Majesty. The letter is dated August 14, 1839, and is notorious among the natives in New Zealand, and it states that—"The natives of New Zealand are a numerous and inoffensive people, whose title to the soil and sovereignty of New Zealand is indisputable."

What is meant by the soil? The Secretary of State says the title of the inhabitants to the soil of New Zealand is as perfect as their title to the sovereignty which has been solemnly recognised by the British Government. Solemnly recognised! What is the meaning of this solemn recognition of the title of the natives to the soil? He says—"We acknowledge New Zealand as a sovereign and independent state. The Queen disclaims for herself and for her subjects any pretensions to seize on the islands of New Zealand, or to govern them as part of the dominions of Great Britain, unless a free and intelligent consent of the natives, expressed according to their usages, should be first obtained."

You now find these usages very absurd, the title to land derived by having eaten up the last incumbent, for instance; but the Secretary of State ought to have considered that before he disclaimed the right of his Sovereign to exercise dominion in New Zealand unless the free and intelligent consent of the natives should have been first obtained. So much for sovereignty. Lord Normanby proceeds—"All dealings with the aborigines for their land must be conducted upon the same principle of sincerity, of justice, and of good faith as must govern your transactions with them for the recognition of her Majesty's sovereignty in the island."

Observe, now, you did not claim the sovereignty by right of conquest, or by that of discovery, but by the cession of the natives. Writing to your representative there you say—"It will be your duty to obtain, by fair and equitable contracts, the cession to the Crown of such lands as may be necessarily required for the occupation of the settlers."

Now, tell me what construction you will put upon those written proofs of your sovereignty? But when you said, "Get the sovereignty by cession, according to the usages of the aborigines, and only take the lands in the same way," what, I ask you again, is the construction that you put upon these engagements? Now, observe

that Lord Normanby says again—"To the natives or their chiefs much of the land of the country is of no actual use, and in their hands it possesses scarcely any exchangeable value."

But first he tells you to "take no land except that which is by cession fairly granted." He further tells you that "you must be cautious that you do not take any land even by fair cession, if it could be considered that the taking of such land would interfere with their rights." These were the instructions which were given by the Secretary of State for the Colonies only about six years since, and in consequence of these instructions you formed a treaty to this effect:—"On account of acquiring sovereignty by cession, her Majesty the Queen of England confirms and grants to the chiefs and tribes of New Zealand, and to their respective families, the full, exclusive, undisturbed possession of their lands, forests, habitations, and other property which they may collectively or individually possess, as long as they may wish or desire to retain possession of them."

Now, my noble friend had argued that the Crown, by proclamation, had claimed the right of pre-emption from the natives, as we admitted only a qualified right on their part; but we claimed the right of pre-emption because those lands were ceded to the Crown by the Treaty of Waitangi. The treaty goes on to say—"The native tribes and individual chiefs give to her Majesty the exclusive right of pre-emption over such land as may be disposed of at such prices as the persons appointed on behalf of the two parties may think fair and reasonable."

The argument, therefore, of my noble friend falls to the ground in respect to this point of pre-emption. The Crown claims a right of pre-emption, because the right of pre-emption is ceded to the Crown by the Treaty of Waitangi. These are the public engagements which you have entered into. You have stipulated on the part of the Crown that, as the price and condition of your possession of sovereignty, the natives should not be called upon to relinquish their lands except by a fair cession, and for a fair equivalent. Now, my noble friend does not contend that there necessarily is on the part of the native chiefs and tribes a claim to the whole of the waste lands in New Zealand; but after this engagement which you have deliberately entered into with them, he thinks that the rights of the natives ought to be clearly ascertained before you can enter into a consideration as to what those particular waste lands are which the Crown may lay claim to. I consider that the right of sovereignty which has been ceded by the natives gives to the Crown the perfect right of possession over all lands which the native tribes cannot lay a perfect claim to; but the tribes cannot, according to their usages, establish a right of property to certain waste lands. I admit your interest in these lands by the engagement entered into between the Crown and the natives—I admit the importance, too, of your future interests in the colony—I admit the great advantage it would be if you could induce these natives to relinquish, by fair cession, some of these lands—I admit that to accomplish so desirable a result, that every effort on our part ought to be made. But if, as I think it is, the question be, whether the Crown shall, upon its own responsibility, undertake to dispossess, by force, and against the will of the inhabitants, the natives from certain lands desired by the New Zealand Company, let us, then, have no mistake upon the point; for you shall not say that I am deceiving you. I tell you at once that we are not prepared to give you any such assurance. Sir, this is the spirit in which we shall meet the question—the same spirit that actuated us in the former discussion of this subject—and which influences me when speaking again upon it. I speak not in a spirit of hostility to the New Zealand Company, but with a sincere desire to see that company restored to prosperity, and her Majesty's government acting in concert and co-operating with it. But to gain that concert and co-operation I will not do that which I believe to be inconsistent with public faith, which I admit was unwisely pledged to the natives of New Zealand. I admit this, Sir; but, at the same time, I think that you are bound to observe it, however weak these natives be. Considerations of justice ought to induce you to respect that weakness. But you admit that the natives are possessed of great powers. Considerations, then, of mere policy must at once induce you to maintain peace with them, rather than come to the determination of dispossessing them of any grounds which they lay claim to, by an exercise of physical force. I do not say that this argument I should have greater reliance upon, than upon your desire faith-



fully and honourably to perform those public engagements into which you have deliberately entered with them. I do not mean this in the mere technical definition of the words. I cannot have a doubt but that you have a power to overbear any force that can be brought against you in New Zealand; but I think that you should rather regard the settlement of this question by cordial and friendly relations, than that you should trust to force and physical strength to overcome your difficulties. Depend on it that the seeds of future government in New Zealand would be very imperfectly laid, and will come to no head or satisfactory maturity, unless you do respect not only the principles of justice, but also unless you bear in mind the natural feelings of the native population. Instead, then, of taking that course which has been taken in regard to other colonies, you should try and incorporate the natives of New Zealand with your own institutions, and, as far as possible, to amalgamate the two countries, and connect them together by deeds of reciprocal kindness. Observe the course which France has taken in Algiers. Recollect that in India you have respected the rights of native tribes to the land. You have, I apprehend, contented yourself with the sovereignty you have there obtained; I think you ought to content yourself with the sovereignty here, and with the title to all that land to which the sovereignty lays claim. But even if there be some further demands made by you, you should try to obtain them by fair cession and equitable arrangement, rather than seek to obtain them by unequitable determination. Sir, I hope I have said nothing to give dissatisfaction to the hon. and learned gentleman. Upon this second debate, and upon this second appeal, I trust the difference between the company and government has not been widened. I feel that I have said nothing that can involve me in any such responsibility. I hope that I have cautiously avoided recrimination or partial proceedings, and have only contented myself with that vindication which I felt it necessary to offer against a most unjust attack that has been made upon my noble friend. I state fairly to the House the course we are prepared to take—I state that to the House of Commons. It is, of course, for them to determine whether they shall adopt an opinion adverse to that. I also say that you shall not succeed in establishing between my noble friend and myself any distinction, for my own opinions in respect to the future policy of New Zealand meet with my noble friend's entire concurrence. The language which I have now uttered is language which, had he been here, he would have himself uttered, but with much greater force. His desires of fulfilling the assurances which I have given (not without having a conference with my noble friend) are equally great as mine. I will not do that which the New Zealand Company seem to think I might do—undertake to supersede, in the discharge of his proper functions, a minister who I believe has discharged his official duties with almost unexampled ability, and with a sincere desire to promote the interests of every colony over which he now presides.

The motion was negatived.

## NATIONAL DEFENCES.

JULY 30, 1845.

In reply to some remarks by Viscount Palmerston, as to the inefficient state of our fortifications, and to the increased facilities afforded by steam navigation to any attacks that may be made on our coast—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: Sir, I feel all the difficulty under which any person placed in my situation must labour in discussing publicly the question to which the noble lord has felt it his duty to call our attention. I totally differ from the noble lord as to the defenceless position of this country. I think I could prove that the noble lord's impression on that subject is altogether erroneous; but I am quite sure that I should not be acting consistently with sound discretion, if I were to state the facts upon which my own opinion is founded. Nothing could be so unwise as to encourage parties—a small minority I trust—in other countries who may be bent on hostility to ours. I should be very sorry to furnish them with instruments to be used against their own government, and thus to prevent that government, though sincerely desirous of maintaining peace, from securing that object on account of the clamour of a certain portion of the community. I must say, generally, however, that the noble

lord has greatly underrated the power which this country would possess, in the event of hostilities, for the vindication of its honour. So far from concurring in the opinion of the noble lord, I believe that in case there should be a necessity imposed on this country of resorting to hostilities, there never was a period when such a demonstration as would then be called forth has been made; the sovereign, supported and encouraged by almost the unanimous voice of the people, being determined in a just cause to make efforts worthy of the ancient character of this country. I have a strong opinion, that upon that head, we have nothing to fear. I think it is hardly possible to estimate what will be seen to be the dormant energy of this country if a just cause should call it forth. At the same time, I must say that I concur in some of the principles which have been expressed by the noble lord. I think it would be most unwise in this country to trust altogether to present appearances; and I hold that it is most advisable that this country should be able to feel confident, that in the event of sudden hostilities, she would be strong enough, and has the means, to protect herself. I quite agree with the noble lord, that on the sudden occurrence of hostilities, as, for example, in the year 1793, unless you are in a state of preparation, the cost of sudden exertion is immense; and that it is a most unwise economy which would leave you to make sudden, precipitate, and unlooked-for efforts, in order to secure your own safety. I think also, with the noble lord, that this country ought to be in such a state, that any other power may not, on that account, be encouraged to resort to hostilities for the purpose of obtaining advantages. I trust, indeed, that we shall be able to preserve the friendly relations which exist between this country and France; this I hope will be the case, both for the sake of England and France, and for the sake of the civilised world. So far are this country and the House of Commons from grudging the prosperity of France, that I am sure I speak the general feeling when I say that we saw the returns respecting the commerce of France with great satisfaction. I wish that more intimate commercial relations may be established between the two countries; but I do trust also that whilst France is increasing in her commerce, she will see that she owes that increase of prosperity to the maintenance of peace, and that there will be among all rational people in that country a deliberate opinion that the honour and interests of France may be much better maintained by cultivating industry, and promoting commercial prosperity, than they could be by seeking that which is perfectly unnecessary for that most gallant country, whose reputation stands so high at every period of her history, namely, the maintenance of her glory by the increase of her territorial possessions. But, Sir, I must own that I am rather surprised at the noble lord's excessive apprehension on this subject; because the noble lord was in office for a period of ten years, and I venture to say that this country is in a better state with respect to the means of repelling aggression than she was at that time. Did the noble lord see France expend the sum of fifteen millions sterling upon the fortifications of Paris, and issue an order increasing the army suddenly to the extent of 100,000 men; and does the noble lord think that this country now stands in the same position with respect to France as it did in 1841? There was no militia ballot at that period; there was not near the same amount of military force that there is at present; and I very much doubt whether there were as many sail of the line. The noble lord has, I admit, suggested many points deserving of serious consideration. It is impossible not to see what a change has taken place with respect to navigation. I think that this country has a perfect right to consult its own security. If it were proposed to increase the military or naval force of the country for the purpose of aggression, we ought most seriously to consider the policy of such a course; but, as to taking measures for our own security in the event of public hostilities, the last consideration which should present itself to the mind of a minister of the Crown is, "What will other powers think?" I should certainly not hesitate to propose to parliament, without reference to any other powers, what I considered necessary even for contingencies. With reference to the dockyards, let me ask what was the state in which we found them? The noble lord does not tell us that years passed without any measures of improvement being adopted. The improvements which are even now going forward make it desirable that we should not be hurried on to the adoption of measures, lest the money which we expend should be entirely thrown away. We have a perfect right, however, to take precautions for

the defence of the naval arsenals and dockyards of this country. For the navy and ordnance we proposed this year an addition of £1,100,000 in the estimates. I am placed, with respect to this matter, between two fires. Every word that I say in one direction may induce other parties to exclaim, "See what the minister said in the House of Commons; we must now have two or three millions more." I should be exceedingly sorry to see a race run between great powers—not a race in commerce and civilization—but each increasing as far as possible its military and naval force. There must be a limit to that. It is a question of the nicest discretion, whether you shall propose large sums for the army or the navy, or whether the effect will be to add to your relative strength. I know not a nicer question with regard to economy and to every other public object, than the extent to which you will proceed. I hope, however, that this country will never depart from that policy which has secured its safety, namely, that of being strong as a naval power, and at the same time not attempting to enter into competition with the great military powers of Europe. Say what you will, this country would not be satisfied with the existence of a standing army of 100,000 or 200,000 men kept within our own land. I admit that the amount of military force is not sufficient now to enable you, consistently with due economy, to meet the demands which may arise; but with respect to our becoming a great military power, and relying upon having a military force able at once to meet that of other countries, except for the purposes of our own defence, that is a competition into which I trust this country will never enter. I do hope that this country will always have such a degree of naval strength as will enable her to feel entire confidence, in the event of hostilities. Then, with regard to the subject of local militia, let me say that I apprehend we have a demand, in case of necessity, upon a body of disciplined men, amounting to 50,000, in whom we might repose great confidence. I refer to the Chelsea pensioners. When I was Secretary of State, twenty years since, I even then felt that the militia was in an unsatisfactory state, and that there ought to be some local force constituted in this country. The noble lord is aware that under the act there is no prohibition against proceeding to ballot for the militia. The act suspends the obligation to ballot, which would otherwise be imposed on the Crown; but, in case of necessity, the Crown would still be able to resort to this force. I would observe, that there has been that change in the state of society within the last few years which would probably render the present militia laws not exactly so suitable as they were, and they might perhaps undergo useful alterations. It is not necessary, perhaps, that I should now enter into any further explanation on this subject which the noble lord has introduced. I am bound to content myself with stating that his impression as to the defencelessness of this country is totally at variance with my own. I speak not of that which concerns the public spirit and the honour of Englishmen, for I am sure that the noble lord will admit, that with whatever difficulties an appeal to the country might be attended, that appeal would be entirely successful. Whatever may be required for the public service will be asked for, without scruple, by her Majesty's government. I am sure the House will feel the necessity of placing this country at all times in such a state of security that it will not have to depend upon temporary and possibly delusive appearances of tranquillity; but there will be actual peace, without any anxiety as to the result of the immediate occurrence of hostilities. The noble lord said that we have fortunately a large surplus. But who is to be thanked for that? We have a large surplus in consequence of that imposition of taxation which, besides giving us this surplus, enables us to take precautions for the security of the country, and to remit that part of our taxation which has appeared to us to press most upon the labour and industry of the community. Having a surplus, we feel that we cannot apply it better than by taking precautions against eventual and possible danger; and the increase of the votes for the navy and ordnance, and the vote proposed with respect to the harbours of refuge, show that, while we attend to the claims of the people to the remission of taxation, we have not neglected the precautions which we think necessary for the safety of the country. With respect to the harbours of refuge, this is the first year that any proposal has been made. The vote is purposely small, and I hope that we shall not be driven forward too fast. Nothing can be more important than that we should take the best opinions as to the proper mode of securing the object. I take it for granted that the House is satisfied of the necessity

which exists for those harbours of refuge which repeated naval commissions have recommended. The subject has undergone such full investigation that there can be no necessity for any further inquiry. Dover, Portland, and Harwich are the sites which, as the result of repeated inquiries, are pointed out as the most appropriate for harbours of refuge. We have felt it our duty with respect to each of those places to take the opinions of the most eminent civil and military engineers as to the best mode of ensuring to the country the greatest permanent advantage as the result of the money expended. With respect to all these places, and especially Dover, it is of the utmost importance that we should have the opportunity of profiting, as far as possible, by the opinions of those who are best qualified to give advice on the subject. These various matters are occupying the serious attention of the government; and if my answer to the noble lord be not entirely satisfactory, I entreat the House to bear in mind that I stand in a position in which I must appeal to their confidence; because I cannot state the particular facts upon which my own impression, as opposed to that of the noble lord, is founded.

Subject at an end. On the 9th of August parliament was prorogued.

## THE ADDRESS.

JANUARY 22, 1846.

[During the interim succeeding the prorogation of parliament on the 9th of August, and which had been successively prorogued to October 2, November 27, December 16, and January 22, Sir Robert Peel, in consequence of a division in the cabinet, tendered his resignation. Lord John Russell was sent for by her Majesty, but the noble lord having been unable to form an administration, Sir Robert Peel, at the command of her Majesty, again consented to take the reins of government.]

Mr. Speaker having reported her Majesty's speech and read it to the House,—Lord F. Egerton moved the Address in reply, which, having been read from the chair, was seconded by Mr. E. Beckett Denison.

**SIR ROBERT PEEL:** Sir, I would fain hope, that although the course which I take is an unusual one, yet that I am acting in conformity with the general wish of the House, in availing myself of the very earliest opportunity of giving that explanation which at no remote period the House will require from me. I would fain hope that I am not obstructing the course of this discussion upon the Address by giving that explanation at this period. But, if no consideration of public advantage could justify me in taking this course, I am sure the generous feelings of the House will deem it only natural that I should desire that not a moment should elapse before I explain to the House the motives by which I have been actuated, and the principles which have governed my conduct. I may feel hurt at having been the object of much accusation upon vague surmise; I may think it unjust to have been condemned without a hearing—I say nothing upon that head; if any momentary feelings of indignation were aroused, the recollection of great indulgence and of great confidence was quite sufficient to efface those temporary feelings. I shall make no allusion, therefore, to particular expressions, or particular accusations; but this I do ask, even while I do not require the reversal of the sentence, I ask for the opportunity, after condemnation, of explaining the motives of my conduct; I ask you to listen at least with patience and indulgence to those facts and that evidence which I shall this night adduce, and which will form the materials on which other tribunals, judging under less excitement, will ultimately pronounce upon the motives and the conduct of men charged with deep responsibility in critical times. I wish to explain what were the grounds which led me and those with whom I acted humbly to tender to a gracious sovereign the resignation of the trust which was committed to us. I wish also to explain what were the circumstances under which that trust was reassumed, and under which I now appear in the House as the minister of the Crown. Sir, the immediate cause which led to the dissolution of the government in the early part of last December, was that great and mysterious calamity which caused a lamentable failure in an article of food on which great numbers of the people in this part of the United Kingdom, and still larger numbers in the sister kingdom, depend mainly for their subsistence. That

was the immediate and proximate cause, which led to the dissolution of the government. But it would be unfair and uncandid on my part, if I attach undue importance to that particular cause. It certainly appeared to me to preclude further delay, and to require immediate decision—decision not only upon the measures which it was necessary at the time to adopt, but also as to the course to be ultimately taken with regard to the laws which govern the importation of grain. I will not assign to that cause too much weight. I will not withhold the homage which is due to the progress of reason and to truth, by denying that my opinions on the subject of protection have undergone a change. Whether holding a private station, or placed in a public one, I will assert the privilege of yielding to the force of argument and conviction, and acting upon the results of enlarged experience. It may be supposed that there is something humiliating in making such admissions. Sir, I feel no such humiliation. I have not so much confidence in the capacity of man, to determine what is right or wrong intuitively, as to make me feel abashed at admitting that I have been in error. I should feel humiliation, if, having modified or changed my opinions, I declined to acknowledge the change for fear of incurring the imputation of inconsistency. The question is, whether the facts are sufficient to account for the change, and the motives for it are pure and disinterested. Nothing could be more base on the part of a public man than to protect himself from danger by pretending a change of opinion; or more inconsistent with the duty he owes to his sovereign and country, than if, seeing reason to alter his course, he forebore to make the alteration by the fear of being taunted with a charge of inconsistency. The real question, as I have said, is, whether the motives for the modification of opinion are sufficient and sincere. Sir, those who contend for the removal of impediments upon the import of a great article of subsistence, such as corn, start with an immense advantage in the argument. The natural presumption is in favour of free and unrestricted importation. It may, indeed, be possible to combat that presumption; it may be possible to meet its advocates in the field of argument, by showing that there are other and greater advantages arising out of the system of prohibition than out of the system of unrestricted intercourse; but even those who so contend will, I think, admit that the natural feelings of mankind are strongly in favour of the absence of all restriction, and that the presumption is so strong, that we must combat it by an avowal of some great public danger to be avoided, or some great public benefit to be obtained by restriction on the importation of food. We all admit that the argument in favour of high protection or prohibition on the ground that it is for the benefit of a particular class, is untenable. The most strenuous advocates for protection have abandoned that argument; they rest, and wisely rest, the defence of protective duties upon higher principles. They have alleged, as I have myself alleged, that there were public reasons for retaining this protection. Sir, circumstances made it absolutely necessary for me, occupying the public station I do, and seeing the duty that must unavoidably devolve on me—it became absolutely necessary for me maturely to consider whether the grounds on which an alteration of the Corn-laws can be resisted are tenable. The arguments in favour of protection must be based either on the principle that protection to domestic industry is in itself sound policy, and that therefore agriculture, being a branch of domestic industry, is entitled to share in that protection; or, that in a country like ours, encumbered with an enormous load of debt, and subject to great taxation, it is necessary that domestic industry should be protected from competition with foreigners; or, again—the interests of the great body of the community, the laborious classes, being committed in this question—that the rate of wages varies with the price of provisions, that high prices imply high wages, and that low wages are the concomitants of low prices. Further, it may be said, that the land is entitled to protection on account of some peculiar burdens which it bears. But that is a question of justice rather than of policy; I have always felt and maintained that the land is subject to peculiar burdens; but you have the power of weakening the force of that argument by the removal of the burden, or making compensation. The first three objections to the removal of protection are objections founded on considerations of public policy. The last is a question of justice, which may be determined by giving some counterbalancing advantage. Now, I want not to deprive those who, arguing *a priori*, without the benefit of experience, have come to

the conclusion that protection is objectionable in principle—I want not to deprive them of any of the credit which is fairly their due. Reason, unaided by experience, brought conviction to their minds. My opinions have been modified by the experience of the last three years. I have had the means and opportunity of comparing the results of periods of abundance and low prices with periods of scarcity and high prices. I have carefully watched the effects of the one system, and of the other—first, of the policy we have been steadily pursuing for some years, viz., the removal of protection from domestic industry; and next, of the policy which the friends of protection recommend. I have also had an opportunity of marking from day to day the effect upon great social interests of freedom of trade and comparative abundance. I have not failed to note the results of preceding years, and to contrast them with the results of the last three years; and I am led to the conclusion that the main grounds of public policy on which protection has been defended are not tenable; at least, I cannot maintain them. I do not believe, after the experience of the last three years, that the rate of wages varies with the price of food. I do not believe, that with high prices, wages will necessarily rise in the same ratio. I do not believe that a low price of food necessarily implies a low rate of wages. Neither can I maintain that protection to domestic industry is necessarily good. I said last year, on the motion of the noble lord (Lord J. Russell,) that I thought protective duties were evils in themselves. But I also said, that as they had grown with our system, and not being incompatible with a high degree of prosperity, I thought they ought not to be lightly abolished, and must be tenderly and cautiously dealt with. It is now, however, impossible for us, after we see the results of the change in the tariff during the last four years, to contend that protection to industry is in itself, and abstractedly, a public good. Then, as to the other argument, which I confess made a great impression on me in the first instance, and which is sanctioned by great authority—that because we have a heavy debt and a high rate of taxation, we must be protected from competition with foreign industry—that argument has also been submitted to the test of the last three years, and, so far as the experience of that period can supply an argument, it is this—that a large debt and heavy taxation are best encountered by abundance and cheapness of provisions, which rather alleviate than add to the weight of the burden. Let us take the result of that experience of constantly diminished protection—on wages—on trade, and on revenue. First, as to wages. Who can deny the fact that during the three years that preceded the month of October last, prices were comparatively low, there was comparative cheapness and plenty, and yet at no period were the wages of labour higher. If you take the three preceding years, you will find high prices, and coexistent with high prices you will find low wages. Well, then, I have six years' experience; I have during the first three years high prices and low wages; I have during the last three years low prices and high wages; and I cannot resist the conclusion that wages do not vary with the price of provisions. They do vary with the increase of capital, with the prosperity of the country, with the increased power to employ labour; but there is no immediate relation between wages and provisions—or if there be a relation it is an inverse ratio. Now, as to the tariff; as I said before, during the last four or five years we have been acting on the admitted principle of removing prohibitions—reducing duties, or abating, and in some cases destroying protection to native industry. That has been the principle, whether right or wrong, on which we have acted—the removal of protection to native industry. Now, what has been the result? I will give you the total amount of exports since the year 1839. The total value of British produce and manufactures exported from the United Kingdom was, in 1839, £53,000,000; in 1840, £51,000,000; in 1841, £51,000,000; in 1842, £47,000,000; in 1843, £52,000,000; in 1844, £58,000,000; that is, the rise from the year when the great invasion upon the protection of domestic industry was made by parliament was from £47,381,000, in 1842, to £58,600,000 in 1844. - But it may be said the China trade made all the difference. Now, let us deduct the whole of that trade. In 1842, our exports to all the countries, except China, amounted to £46,411,000; and in 1844, they increased by £10,000,000, amounting to £56,000,000. For the last year we can only have the account for eleven months preceding December. In 1843, the exports of all our principal articles of manufacture to all parts of the world, including China,

amounted to £41,011,000; in 1844, to £47,312,000, and, during the first eleven months of 1845, to £47,764,000. Such is the state of our foreign exports under this system of continued removal of protection. Now, let me take the returns of the revenue as bearing on this question—ought there to be high protection in a country encumbered with an immense public debt and heavy taxation? In 1842, I proposed a reduction in the customs to an estimated amount of £1,438,000; in 1844, I proposed a further reduction in the customs' duties to the amount of £273,000; in 1845, to the large amount of £2,418,000. I estimated the total loss from these several reductions at £4,129,000; and let it be remembered that I discarded altogether the revenue from corn. How have these calculations been verified? Have £4,000,000 been lost? No. The total amount of the loss has been £1,600,000. I dealt with the excise last year, and made a reduction of a million of excise duties; the whole of the glass duties, the whole of the auction duty was taken off; the loss on that occasion was estimated at £1,000,000. Observe, that was not a mere reduction of duties; there was no expectation, therefore, that increased consumption would make up for a diminished rate of taxation, for these duties were totally abolished. I felt confident, that although the glass and auction duties were abolished, still by vivifying other branches of industry, the revenue would derive some compensation. What will be the fact on the 5th of April? I believe, that notwithstanding the total reduction, the absolute loss of a million, my firm belief is, that the revenue from the excise will this year be greater than ever. Notwithstanding these reductions there has been a salient spring of prosperity which has supplied the void you caused by the remission of taxation. Well then, with that evidence before me, could I contend that on account of high taxation or great debt you must necessarily continue high protective duties? I have shown you that my estimates as to a loss in the customs have been already falsified; that the customs this year amount to nearly £20,000,000; that, comparing the customs' revenue of 1845 with the customs' revenue of 1842, after that diminution of taxation to the extent of £4,000,000, the customs of this year, excluding from both years the revenue from foreign corn, are better by £100,000 than in the former year. But I will now refer to more important considerations than those either of trade or revenue; I will take the state of crime in the country. My right hon. friend, at the head of the Home Department, stated last year that reductions had taken place in the number of commitments, and in the crimes committed. In the year 1842 there was an increase of crime and commitments; in 1843, there was a turn, and a decrease began; and the decrease in the commitments remarkable in 1843 and 1844 continued in 1845. The total number of commitments in 1845 was 24,350, that is, 2,287 less than in the highest preceding year, 1842. In 1843, there was a decrease of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the preceding year; in 1844, a further decrease of 10 3-10 per cent.; and in 1845, a decrease of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., and all this in an increasing population. This decrease of crime in the last year has taken place in all the chief manufacturing districts; and not only in all the chief manufacturing districts, but, with the exception of five, there has been a corresponding and almost equal decrease in all the chief agricultural districts. What is the state of Wales? In Wales the decrease of commitments is more remarkable than in almost any other part of the kingdom. So much for actual crime. With respect to crimes connected with sedition, discontent, and disaffection to the government—in the last two years the office of the attorney-general, I may say, has been a sinecure. There has been only a single prosecution for an offence of this nature during the whole of the last year. Government takes no credit for lenity; there has been no prosecution, because the crime of sedition did not exist. In 1840-1-2-3—listen to this, and seriously consider it—there were 1,257 persons committed on charges of seditious and riotous offences. In 1843-4-5, only 124 persons were committed so charged, instead of 1,257; while, in the last year, I believe there was not one. In 1845, there were 422 persons sentenced to transportation less than in 1842. In the last three years there were 1,701 persons sentenced to transportation less than in the three preceding years. This has been during a period of comparative abundance, and low prices. Is it possible to resist the inference that employment, low prices, comparative abundance, contribute to the diminution of crime? Now, these are great social advantages; I will not say they have been promoted by—I say only they have been concurrent with, the diminution of protection to domestic industry—concurrent

with comparative abundance. Well, have these advantages been purchased by any serious detriment to that great interest whose welfare ought to be one of the first objects of our concern—the agricultural interest? Protection has been diminished. I have been the object of repeated accusation and attack, for diminishing it; and deeply should I regret if those great social advantages to which I have referred had been accompanied, in consequence of that diminution of protection, with any serious injury to agriculture. Let us take the four great articles, in respect of which there has been a diminution of protection. Foreign flax has, for many years, been admitted at a very low duty into this country. What duty remained we remitted last year. There is now, therefore, a perfectly unrestricted import of foreign flax. In 1824, the duty on flax was £10 14s. 6d. per ton. It is now absolutely nothing. The reduction having taken place, what was the effect on the price of flax? The price of fine flax in Belfast market in 1843, was 65s. to 70s.; in 1844, it was 63s. to 68s.; in 1845, from 65s. to 68s.; and in January, 1846, the present month, the price of Irish flax, fine Irish flax, in the Belfast market, was from 70s. to 80s. There was no reduction when made that caused so much alarm, and by the alarm did injury at first, and which it was prophesied would do so much injury, as the removal of the absolute prohibition on the importation of foreign cattle. The permission to import, at a very low rate, foreign cattle, foreign sheep, and foreign swine, was accompanied with many predictions—predictions that serious loss and injury would be inflicted on the agricultural interest—and it was said that we should deeply regret the day those changes were made, and the panic that would arise. Now, has serious injury been sustained by that reduction? There was before that absolute prohibition, and there is now the admission of foreign cattle at a very low rate; and I must, on this question, first of all, admit that there has been a gradual increase in the importation. I want, at the same time, to show that concurrently with increase in importation, there has been increase in the price of the articles. In 1844, there were imported 2,800 oxen and cows, and in the eleven months of the year 1845, ending with November, there were no less than 15,000 imported, showing a very great increase. Have prices in this country been affected either in a corresponding degree, or in any, by this large importation? In 1844, the contract price for the victualling stores in the navy for salt beef, was £3: 18: 2; the contract price entered into for the navy, in December, 1845, was, I regret to say, £6: 8: 8. The salt pork that was contracted for in 1844, was £3: 15: 10 a tierce; and in 1845, it was £6, 12s. The contract price for fresh beef for the navy, in 1844, was £1: 14: 9; the contract price in 1845, was £2: 2: 2. Now, all this increase in price was concurrent with increased importation. One prophecy, if I recollect rightly, was, that there would be an importation into this country of 3,500,000 pigs, and that the price of salt pork would be immensely reduced; but look at the price of salt pork rising from £3: 15: 10 to £6: 12: 4, and I think about 4,000 swine have been imported. There was no article last year that caused so much alarm as lard. The duty was then taken off. In 1840, there were 97 cwt. of foreign lard imported into this country. In 1842, the duty was reduced from 8s. to 2s. a cwt., and there were then imported 48,312 cwt.; in 1844, 76,000 cwt. were imported; and in 1845, the importation had reached above 80,000 cwt. And what has been the price of domestic lard at Belfast during that period? In 1844, it was 48s. a cwt.; in 1845, it was 67s.; and in January of the present year, notwithstanding the increase caused by this importation, the price has risen from 48s. in 1844, to 62s. There is only one other article of great importance which has been seriously affected by the reduction to which I shall recur, and that is the article of wool. We proposed in 1844, that the duty upon foreign wool should be altogether annihilated—that there should be no duty. It was certainly more in deputations than in this House that any objection was strenuously urged to the reduction; but certainly there were anticipations of great loss to the wool-grower from the reduction of the duty on foreign wool. Here again there has been an enormous increase in the imports. In 1842, there were 45,880,000 lbs. of foreign wool brought into this market; in 1844, 65,790,000 lbs.; and in ten months of the last year I am bound to admit there has been no less than 65,216,000 lbs. of foreign wool brought in, in consequence of the reduction of the duty. Now, what has been the reduction in the price? In 1842, the price of Southdown wool, when there was a duty upon foreign, was 11d., of long wool, 10d.; in 1843 the price of Southdown was 11½d., of long wool, 11d.; in



1844 the price of Southdown was 1s. 2d., and of long wool 1s. 2d. also. In December, 1845, eighteen months after the total reduction of the duty, the price of Southdown wool rose from 11d., the price in 1842, to 1s. 4½d. The average price in December, 1845, of Southdown, was 1s. 4d., and of long wool 1s. 2d. Such have been the effects of this reduction, made in 1842, so far as domestic agriculture is concerned. I think, as far as we have had experience within the last four years, I have shown that, by the removal of protection, domestic industry and the great social interests of the country have been promoted; crime has diminished, and morality has improved. I can bring the most conclusive proof that the public health has been improved, yet the national trade has been extending, our exports have increased; and this—and I rejoice in it—has been effected, not only without serious injury to those interests from which protection was withdrawn, but I think I have shown that it has been concurrent with an increase in the prices of those articles. Now, it is right I should state, that notwithstanding the conviction which this experience has brought home to my mind, yet my decided impression was, that on other grounds the charge of considering the change in the present Corn-law ought not to have devolved upon me. This I was firmly resolved upon, that I could not this session, on the motion of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Villiers), for the consideration of the Corn-laws—I could not, with these convictions, which, say as you will, I cannot withstand, have met that motion with a direct negative. Now, Sir, let me again repeat that I claim no credit whatever for having drawn my conclusions from abstract reasoning. My conviction has been brought about by observation and experience; and I could not, with this conviction, have undertaken the defence of the Corn-laws, either upon the public ground that this country being highly taxed, the continuance of protection was necessary, or upon the ground that it was for the interest of the labouring classes that high prices should continue as a guarantee of high wages; and I could not have undertaken it upon the ground that the removing protection from domestic industry must necessarily paralyse commerce, lower prices, and undermine our national prosperity. But this I wish most ardently—I wish to have the opportunity of frankly stating to those gentlemen who have honoured me upon so many occasions with their confidence, that I can continue this contest no longer—that they must devolve the duty of maintaining protection upon other persons, who can adduce better arguments in its favour than I can. I doubted whether it would not have been advantageous if, in another parliament, this question should have been considered; but it would have been my bounden duty to have committed the defence, if a defence were undertaken, of protection to other hands more able to maintain the conflict. I should have wished, I say, that another parliament should have had an opportunity of considering this question; but there did occur, during the course of the last autumn, that which precluded me from taking the course which would have been most agreeable to my personal feelings. A great calamity befell us, the limits of which it was difficult to divine, the consequences of which, though felt, it may still be difficult to describe. There occurred a great visitation of providence, extending not to Ireland only, but Great Britain, America, and many parts of the world; and we, her Majesty's servants, constituting the government of this country, were called upon to consider what should be done to lessen the calamity? There appeared to be a great and a pressing danger, and it was our duty towards our sovereign and towards the country to meet that danger. If it was advisable, from the pressure of the deficiency to take immediate measures, it would have been impossible, with our conviction of the necessity, to abstain; with our convictions, we could not, consistently with the duty we owed to the sovereign and the country. If we had, indeed, pretended apprehensions of a scarcity for the purpose of effecting an alteration in the Corn-laws, nothing could have been more base or dishonest than to have taken such a step; but you shall have the opportunity of judging of the motives upon which I and others have acted, and you shall determine whether or no, with the information we were in possession of, we were not justified in drawing the conclusion that it was impossible to maintain the existing commercial system. My own opinion was founded upon the evidence which I shall now adduce; and it was impossible, upon that evidence, to come to any other opinion. The advice which I individually offered at an early period—so early as in the month of November, was to meet this emergency by a suspension of the import duties on foreign corn. I came to that conclusion;

and I was adduced to advise that unusual—not unprecedented, but I admit unusual—course, upon the following considerations. I will proceed first to an explanation of the circumstances under which, early in December, the government was temporarily dissolved, and under which the government, as now constituted, resumed office. There are two important periods in giving that explanation, to which I must draw attention—first, the period which elapsed between the 1st of November, 1845, and the 6th of November; and, second, the period which elapsed between the 25th of November and the 6th of December. I propose to read consecutively the information that was received from different parts of this country and the Continent which appeared to me to justify the conclusion to which I came, both in the early part of November, and towards the close of that month and the beginning of the following month. I will give the date of each letter that I shall quote; but, of course, the letters which were received, subsequently to the 6th November, can form no justification of the advice; but though I shall give the date of each letter, I will not divide the evidence into two periods, but I will give the whole of it consecutively. The disease which affected the potato crop in this country was also felt in other parts of the world; and there were in other parts of Europe apprehensions of scarcity. For instance, the resident agent of the government, writing from Poland, on the 22nd of October, said—"The cost of articles of food is stated to be higher than it has been since 1813 and 1814. The unfavourable results of the harvests in Podolia, Lithuania, Galicia, the German Baltic provinces, preclude the hope of foreign aid. No alleviation of the general distress is expected before next autumn."

In a letter, dated the 14th of December, Colonel Wynford, writing from Riga, says—"The supply of rye and rye-flour sent from St. Petersburg is insufficient for the relief of the Livonians, and discontent prevails."

From Prussia we received the following. On the 10th of November the Minister of the interior informed Lord Westmoreland that the potato disease had been observed in almost every part of the Prussian monarchy. From Belgium, dated the 24th of September, "the chambers sanctioned the proposal of the government to prohibit export, and permit import." Egypt, on the 22nd of October, 1845, prohibited exportation of all corn arriving at Alexandria after that day. Turkey prohibited the export of all grain from the ports of Anatolia and her Asiatic provinces from the 27th of August, 1845, to harvest time in 1846. Sweden prohibited the export of potatoes from the 15th of October until the next harvest. There was, indeed, at this period a general apprehension of scarcity of provisions extending from Sweden to Egypt, and from Riga to Turkey, and measures were taken to stop their exportation, and for excluding us from some of our usual sources of supply. With regard to England and Scotland, this is a part of the information which reached the government. It is a letter addressed to Sir James Graham by a great salesman in London, who deals largely in the retail part of his business—the sale of potatoes. But I should first state, that the earliest account I received of the disease in the potato crop was from the Isle of Wight, where it was estimated that the crop had almost entirely failed. The gentleman to whom I have just referred wrote, on the 11th of August, as follows:—"Being myself a large grower, some years to the extent of 300 acres, in Kent, where I farm, am also a salesman in London, and having been engaged largely in the retail part of the business, can give an opinion. I received a letter on the 1st instant from my agent at Ash near Sandwich, stating that the crops were blighted in that neighbourhood the same as in October last year (it was then only partial in East Kent.) On Tuesday last, I went down by the Dover eight o'clock train. On my arrival there, I immediately drove all round the neighbourhood of Sandwich, Ash, Wingham, and its neighbourhood, and found the whole of the crop, early and late, not excepting the cottagers' gardens, were being entirely destroyed. On my return, I could trace it by the side of the whole line to Tonbridge. Have since looked over the tops that come as covering on that article to the different markets, and find they are all affected. On Tuesday last, I paid a visit to my farm at Maidstone, and found it had made fearful destruction there, and returned by way of Gravesend. All were alike affected. The same evening I went to East and West Ham, in Essex. Amongst the large growers, found it was just appearing. Friday, I went to Leytonstone and neighbourhood. All are alike."

That letter, then, contained conclusive proof that, in the opinion of this gentleman, the potato crop in Kent was seriously injured. The next letter is in reference to the state of Lancashire, and was from the Rev. Mr. Clay, chaplain to the House of correction at Preston, dated the 23rd of October:—"It is too certain that the potato crop in this part of the country will be a serious failure. I have obtained information from the districts extending as far as Rufford and Croston on the south, the Fylde country and Blackpool on the west, and Lancaster on the north; and from all quarters of the accounts speak of great injury to the crops, though they vary as to the extent of it. My information, verbal and written, has come from scientific agriculturists, from practical farmers, and from dealers. Those among the first-named who have paid much attention to the facts, estimate the loss, as it exists now, at more than two-fifths. But the progress of the disease is so rapid, and its presence so universal, that it is impossible to conjecture what may be the amount of the defalcation by Christmas."

Here is a letter from Mr. Wood, chairman of the excise, who, writing on the 2nd December from Yorkshire, thus addressed the Chancellor of the Exchequer:—"You will regret to hear that the potato disease has now manifested itself in the most extensive manner in this district. Potatoes were selling ten days since at 2s. to 2s. 6d. a bushel of 70 lbs., in York. Yesterday, the same weight sold at 1s. 2d., owing to the farmers bringing an extra quantity to market. I have, consequently, had several pits opened on this estate, and I fear that before Christmas we shall not have a sound one; what the poor are to live on, I cannot guess. I know you will be anxious to have accurate information, and therefore have ventured to give you this account."

From Scotland, I received a letter from my hon. friend the member for the county of Dumfries, which gave us as unfavourable an account as any I had seen from that part. Mr. Hope Johnstone, writing on the 22nd November, says—"I am sorry to say, that in so far as my own observation has gone, the disease appears to be progressing. I have to-day examined a large quantity of potatoes grown on some of the best and dryest soils in this neighbourhood, and have not found one potato in twenty untainted, while three-fourths are quite unfit for human food. These have been carefully housed, and have never been exposed to damp since they were taken out of the ground. In Dumfries-shire also the decay is going on rapidly."

These were the accounts which reached me in the months of October and November with respect to the extent of this disease in parts of Great Britain. Now as to the accounts from Ireland, because the pressure appeared to be the greatest in that country, the people there chiefly subsisting upon potatoes. It is difficult to estimate the numbers who subsist upon potatoes. But here is the report made to the government, presented by Mr. Lucas, who was member for Monaghan, Sir R. Routh, and Professor Kane. They say that the numerical proportion of the Irish population that live exclusively upon potatoes, includes, certainly, four millions. It was, therefore, a calamity which threatened the subsistence of not less than four millions in Ireland that the government had to provide against. Now, first I will read to the House the information which came to us from the chief authority in Ireland—the lord-lieutenant, who remitted to us every day the principal information which he received. It was the duty of my right hon. friend and myself to read the reports thus received, and to that duty we did devote many anxious days and nights. I will not refer to the detailed reports received in great numbers from Ireland. They were nearly all concurrent; but I will state at once the impressions of the chief authority, and the communications which he made to the government. I will begin with the 17th October, when Lord Heytesbury writes to the secretary of state—"Even if the crops should turn out to be as bad as is now apprehended, it is not thought that there will be any immediate pressure in the market. There will be enough saved for immediate consumption. The evil will probably not be felt in all its intensity till towards the month of February or the beginning of spring. I am assured that there is no stock whatever of last year's potatoes in the country."

So deep was the impression of danger made on him who was chiefly responsible for guarding against any calamity, that hardly a day passed that he did not reiterate these statements. All I ask now, after the accusations which have been brought against me, is, that I may place upon record the evidence on which I have acted

There may, perhaps, now be no danger; but if you are to judge of our motives, the real question at issue is, what were the apprehensions which responsible men were, at that time, inclined to entertain? On the 20th of October, Lord Heytesbury writes again—"Our accounts continue to be of the most discouraging nature. They are regularly transmitted to Sir James Graham's office. One of the most embarrassing circumstances attending the disease is, that potatoes dug up to all appearance perfectly sound, after a short time begin to decay, and very soon rot altogether. Under such circumstances, it is impossible to form any decisive opinion as to the amount of the calamity."

On the 24th, he writes—"From the accounts which reach us I should be inclined to say that the progress of the disease has, in some localities, been checked; but I dare not lay too great a stress upon this; for we constantly receive satisfactory reports of the state of the potatoes when dug, and learn, a few days after, that they have all rotted in the pits. It is this insecurity that forms our greatest difficulty. We do not know, and cannot know, the extent of the evil."

On the 27th, he says—"We are most anxious for the result of the deliberations of the Cabinet upon the state of the potato crops in Ireland; the reports from various country gentlemen and public bodies continue to be of so alarming a nature that it seems desirable that something should be done, if it be only to tranquillize the public mind, and diminish the panic. Everything is rising rapidly in price; and the people begin to show symptoms of discontent, which may ripen into something more. Should we be authorized in issuing a proclamation prohibiting distillation in grain? This is demanded on all sides."

On the 8th November, in answer to a letter written by my right hon. friend, inquiring how it was, if the danger were so great, that he had replied to the lord mayor of Dublin, that there was no immediate apprehension, he writes again—"It is perfectly true that I did, in my answer to the lord mayor, say that there was no immediate pressure in the market; but you must not give too wide a meaning to that observation, which had reference merely to his demand that the exportation of grain should be prohibited, and the ports immediately thrown open. My meaning was, that there was nothing so pressing as to require us to act without waiting for the decision of the responsible advisers of the Crown. But the danger may be upon us before we are aware of its being near; for, as I said in a former letter, the sudden decay of the potatoes dug up in an apparently sound state, sets all calculations at defiance. Some precautionary measures must be adopted, and adopted promptly; for there is danger in delay. As the digging of the potatoes advances, we see it more clearly; and I regret to say, that professor Lindley, when he took leave of me yesterday, told me, that he doubted very much whether the potatoes would keep through the winter."

On the 11th November, the Lord-lieutenant says—"The accounts we receive of the progress of the potato harvest from the constabulary are still very unsatisfactory; but those from the resident magistrates are rather less unfavourable."

But then mark the postscript—"Since this letter was written, later reports have been submitted to me, in which even the resident magistrates now appear to be of opinion that the disease is extending, and the evil much greater than they had imagined it to be. The heavy rains of the last few days have done infinite mischief."

And in the last letter from the Lord-lieutenant of Ireland, which I shall read to you, dated November 17th, he says—"The disease progresses apparently unchecked by any of the precautions adopted; and the ill-intentioned leave nothing undone to irritate and exasperate the people. A very bad spirit prevails in many of the provinces. If we had to deal only with a short crop, we might calculate with some degree of certainty upon the time when the pressure would be felt; but how rely upon any calculation when the potatoes are perishing in the pits? When the evil day of scarcity does come, it will probably come with fearful rapidity. We must not allow ourselves to be taken by surprise."

Such being the accounts received with reference to the state of the disease, I do hope that those who may have been disposed to blame us will be inclined to make allowance for the feelings of those whose duty it was to be watching, day by day, the progress of this calamity, to be forecasting the prospects of the future, and to

be considering what were the means of precaution which ought to be adopted. You may say, this is our own official information; but reports reached us from other quarters—from gentlemen wholly unconnected with the government—and I could produce thousands; but I will take those only to which, perhaps, the greatest importance should be attached. Here is a letter from the secretary of the royal agricultural society in Ireland. He says—"I beg leave to send you an extract from a Dublin morning paper, which will give you a correct account of the measures which the council of the society have adopted respecting the prevailing disease in the potato crop. I beg leave also to state, that when I issued a circular, about a month since, to the secretaries of about 120 local societies, in connexion with the central one, I got several answers from persons, stating that the disease was not then apparent in their immediate neighbourhood; but I have since received letters from most of them, stating that, upon digging the crops, they found the disease in almost every quarter; and I may safely say at present, that there is not a county in Ireland, that is not, more or less, affected by it. I shall barely add, Sir, that the greatest panic appears to exist in all parts of the community; and those who know the country best, are most puzzled how to act. One thing, however, I think, is certain, that enough has already transpired to justify the most prompt and energetic measures on the part of the public and the government."

I will now take some letters from gentlemen connected with Ireland, but still unconnected with the government. Lord Montague says—"Take it, however, at the least, I do not recollect any former example of a calamitous failure being anything near so great and so alarming as the present. Generally, we have seen the means of carrying our people forward, at least, till summer approaches, and till we were within two or three months of the new crop. The case is very different now; and, in some places, I know not how the peasantry will get through the winter in very many cases."

The Duke of Leinster presided at a meeting in Dublin, on the 31st of October, at which the following resolutions were agreed to:—"That the committee do respectfully represent to the lord-lieutenant, that it has now been ascertained beyond a doubt that famine, and, consequently, pestilence, are immediately imminent, unless the government shall, without hesitation or delay, take the most prompt measures to provide for the people, and to organize means for the distribution of support in each locality throughout the land. That we respectfully call upon his excellency the lord-lieutenant forthwith to order the ports of Ireland to be opened for the importation of Indian corn, rice, and other articles suited for human food."

I have also a communication from Lord Clare, which contains similar expressions. On the first appearance of this disorder in the potatoes, we sent to Ireland—not trusting altogether to the reports which we had received—two gentlemen of the highest eminence, who must be known to almost every member of this House—Dr. Lindley, professor of botany, and Dr. Lyon Playfair. They were entirely unconnected with Ireland; and they were to found their opinions upon what they saw. They went to Ireland; they travelled through several counties; and when they returned, they requested that they might meet me. My right hon. friend and I had an interview with Dr. Lindley; and the result of that interview was so alarming, that we desired Dr. Lindley and Dr. Playfair to leave upon record their impressions. Accordingly, they addressed a letter to us, on the 15th November, to the following effect:—"During our stay in Ireland, we carefully examined such official papers as were transmitted to us from the castle. We consulted persons acquainted with the facts of the disease. We visited the district lying between Dublin and Drogheda, and inspected various potato fields and stores in the counties of Dublin, Louth, Meath, Westmeath, and a part of Kildare. Judging from the evidence thus collected, and from what we have seen of the progress of the disease in England, we can come to no other conclusion than that one-half of the actual potato crop of Ireland is either destroyed, or remains in a state unfit for the food of man. We, moreover, feel it our duty to apprise you that we feel this to be a low estimate. We would now add, melancholy as this picture is, that, in all probability, the late rainy weather has rendered the mischief yet greater. It is also necessary to direct your attention to the quantity of seed potatoes which must be reserved for the coming year, if the cultivation of this plant is to be persevered in. We can state that, on an average,

one-eighth of the crop is required for planting the same quantity of ground ; so that, in fact, only three-eighths of the crop can, in our view, be at the moment assumed to be available for food."

I am now stating the particular circumstances which led to the dissolution of the government ; and, in doing so, the House must bear in mind that I refer to two periods—the first interval comprising what occurred between the 1st and 6th of November, and the second interval, what occurred between the 25th of November, and the 6th of December ; and those who dissented from my opinion in the cabinet, must recollect that any letters or reports received since the 6th of November, can have no bearing whatsoever upon the advice which I gave between the 1st and 6th of November. The letters and reports only which have a bearing upon that advice, are those which were received prior to the 6th of November. Those letters referred, many of them, to the state of the crop on the continent ; many of them, also, to the state of the crop in England ; and some of them to the crop in Ireland. The cabinet met several times between the 31st of October and the 6th of November. On the 1st of November, recollect, there was no agitation, and no petitions had been presented. It appeared to me, however, that the reports received from the lord-lieutenant—that the example of foreign countries—that the example of Belgium, which had cleared the market of Liverpool almost in one day, and had caused a rise of 75 per cent. in the price of rice—rendered it the duty of the government to take a step, which was not without a precedent, and either by an order in council, or by calling parliament together within a fortnight, to remove for a time all restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn. That was the advice I gave on the 1st of November. I was perfectly ready to take the responsibility of issuing an order in council. The period was a critical one. There was an advantage in issuing an order in council, for time would thus have been saved ; and I was prepared, as the head of the government, to take that responsibility. I did not insist, however, upon the order in council ; for I was equally prepared to call parliament together immediately, and to advise the removal, for a limited period, of all restrictions on the importation of corn. I did not consider it any objection that the temporary removal of those restrictions might compel a reconsideration of the tariff. My advice at that period was not followed. Three only of my colleagues concurred in the view which I took, and we separated on the 6th November ; I reserving to myself the right of again calling the cabinet together, in the hope that if the alarm which I apprehended should be confirmed by subsequent occurrences, the advice which I gave would be followed at a later period. Now, so far as I was personally concerned, that was the period for me to have tendered my resignation. I can truly say that if I did not tender it at that time, it was purely from public, and not from private considerations. I was met as a minister by great difficulties ; but I felt it my bounden duty to adhere to my post, and not to evade, as I might have done, those difficulties with which I was beset. I might have said, "My opinion has been overruled by a great majority. Three only of my colleagues take the same views that I do, and I cannot consent to incur the responsibility of continuing in office." That was the course which I might have adopted. I resolved, however, not to abandon my post. The cabinet was reassembled on the 25th of November. I confess that the information received in the interval had not in the slightest degree diminished my apprehensions. In the meantime we had taken, with the unanimous concurrence of the cabinet, extraordinary steps ; we had appointed a commission to inquire and to take precautionary measures against a sudden occurrence of distress. We had appointed a commission for the purpose of making inquiries in Ireland, and had taken steps also to prevent the spread of fever, which is so frequently the consequence of distress. On the 25th November, then, it became necessary to consider what should be the instructions to be issued to the commission. Those instructions were determined on, and received the assent of the cabinet. I stated at that time that it appeared to me that the issuing of those instructions was inconsistent with the determination to maintain untouched the present Corn-law. I could not, therefore, consent to the giving instructions to take precautionary measures against scarcity, and against fever, the consequence of scarcity, without reserving to myself the entire power of proposing other measures for relieving that scarcity. The instructions were issued, and again I brought under the consideration of the government the same measure

which I brought forward on the 1st of November—that is, the suspension of the duties upon foreign corn, either by an order in council or by the sanction of parliament. At that period, however, my position was entirely changed. I had advised the same measure on the 1st of November; but the lapse of time, the increase of agitation, and other circumstances, had materially affected my position. I was overruled in the cabinet at the earlier period, when it could have been done more naturally and more effectually. I felt that, by the pressure of circumstances, my position was now changed. The noble lord opposite had in the interval written his letter; and I admit, giving him credit for the best intentions, that it was a letter which, after what had passed in the cabinet, materially affected my position. If the order in council had been issued on the 1st of November, it would have been the order of a united cabinet, the act would have appeared as one which was adopted by a united body, and under the sense of a great necessity. We should have anticipated agitation—it would have been impossible to attribute it to fear—it would have had the appearance of taking a natural and reasonable precaution—I will not say against a great calamity, but—against the possibility of a great calamity. It was impossible for me, and for those who agreed with me, after receiving the letter I have read from Drs. Lindley and Playfair, not to feel justified in adopting precautionary measures, even if they should afterwards prove to be unnecessary. But I felt on the 26th of November that nothing but the support of a united government, after that letter of the noble lord, would give me the chance of bringing this matter to a successful issue. I should then appear to have adopted the measure because it was recommended by the noble lord. His letter was dated on the 22nd of November; the cabinet met on the 26th; and the public impression would have been that the act of the 26th of November was but a servile adoption of the course recommended by the noble lord. Still, notwithstanding this total alteration of my position, I would not have abandoned the post of danger if I had been supported by a united cabinet. But that was not the result of our deliberations. It was my painful duty to differ from one for whom I have felt the sincerest friendship—for whose public and private character I felt and still feel the highest respect—I mean my noble friend, Lord Stanley. The whole of these deliberations passed in the most entire and cordial amity; but his view, of course sincerely adopted, after mature deliberation, was a persuasion that the danger was greatly magnified, and that there was no necessity for the suspension of these laws. That was his opinion. My noble friend stated not only that a suspension was not necessary, but he thought that there was no necessity for a reconsideration of the Corn-law. I wish to give my noble friend full credit for having formed his opinion with perfect honesty both of thought and purpose; but my opinion differed from his. I thought that there was a perfect justification at the time for extraordinary measures, and that the adoption of extraordinary measures would compel the reconsideration of the Corn-law. My noble friend was not the only member of the administration who would have refused me the inestimable aid of his counsel and his support; and that being the case—believing as I did that his resignation would be followed by that of others—thinking that under such circumstances the attempt to settle the question, which I thought to settle, would fail, and that I should fail after having made new combinations, and that I should be compelled to offer worse terms than the interests in question were entitled to claim at my hand, I felt it to be my duty, not being supported by the unanimous voice of my colleagues, humbly to tender to her Majesty my resignation. That resignation her Majesty was pleased to accept; and as my late colleagues were not themselves prepared to carry on the government, her Majesty, of her own choice, sent for the noble lord. The noble lord undertook the task of forming an administration—I believed then that I was in the situation of a private member—that I was reduced to the ranks, and that I was at entire liberty to act on the suggestions of my own conscience; and I do not hesitate to say that in that capacity I would have done all in my power to promote the settlement of this question. The duty of adjusting would then have been left to the noble lord, and in my capacity of a private member I repeat that I would have done all I could to facilitate a fair and final settlement of the question. I remained under the impression that my functions had ceased until Saturday, the 20th of December. On Thursday, the 18th, it was intimated to me by her Majesty that the

noble lord had undertaken the duty of forming an administration, and on the 19th I received a gracious communication from her Majesty stating that, as my relation to her Majesty was about to terminate, she wished again to see me, for the purpose of taking a final farewell; and Saturday, the 20th of December, was the day appointed for that purpose. Upon waiting on her Majesty—having heard through the courtesy of the noble lord that he had found all his efforts to form an administration were in vain—upon waiting on her Majesty she was pleased to inform me, that so far from my taking my final leave, she was obliged to demand of me that I should withdraw my offer of resignation. Her Majesty had understood from those of my colleagues who had differed from me that they were unprepared to form, and did not advise the formation, of a government on the principle of the existing protective system. That the noble lord, having undertaken the formation of a government, had failed, from causes which it is unnecessary for me to notice; and the noble lord having signified to her Majesty that he had failed in his attempt to form a government, her Majesty requested that I should not persist in the tender of my resignation. I do not hesitate to say that I informed her Majesty on the instant, and without a moment's hesitation, that the noble lord having failed, and the colleagues with whom I had heretofore acted, not thinking it advisable to form an administration, I did inform her Majesty on the instant, that I would return to town as her Majesty's minister—that I would withdraw my resignation, and inform my colleagues of my determination, and urge them to assist me in carrying on the business of the country. I resolved, therefore, to meet them in the capacity of the minister of the Crown, and to submit to them the measures I proposed to bring before parliament. My noble friend at once expressed the regret he felt that he could not co-operate with me in the difficult circumstances in which I was placed; but my colleagues generally thought it was their duty to assist me in the arduous task I had undertaken. I have now, Sir, stated to the House the circumstances under which I felt it my duty to tender my resignation, and also the circumstances under which I again returned to office. Sir, I have given, on the earliest day on which it is possible, notice, that it is my intention, on the part of the government, to submit to the consideration of the House measures connected with the commercial and financial affairs of the country. My firm determination is not to anticipate discussion. I know that the information I have given must be imperfect—I know that it may give rise to some misconception, and that I must ask for a suspension of the judgment of the House; but my desire is to disconnect a great political question from the mere personal and party one; to keep my explanation, so far as it refers to personal matters, distinct from the great question itself, and my information therefore is necessarily imperfect. Therefore I do hope, that after having referred to the evidence in the possession of the government, although many may think that the conclusions to which I and others have come as to the danger have been erroneous, I advise them not to be too confident, as we have yet seven months to pass before a new supply of food can be obtained for the people. I remember the accounts that have been lately coming in; but I ask the House not to form too precipitate a conclusion that the danger has passed. It is not so. Sir, I trust I may have satisfied some of those who think the conclusions were erroneous, that, at least, the advice was honest, for advising a resort to extraordinary measures. Sir, you can hardly estimate what a painful position it is for those whose public duty requires them to take precautions against so fearful a calamity as famine. I am charged with treason against the agricultural interest—treason, indeed, it would be, if, with my deep conviction and solemn impressions of the position in which the country was placed, I subjected the agricultural interest to the odium of claiming protection against the hazard of scarcity—of calling for votes of public money for purchasing oats and other grain, while at the same time I resisted on their part any relaxation of protective duties. Why, there are some points in which you could not possibly resist it. I take the law as it applies to the introduction of Indian corn. It is in a most anomalous state, because the present amount of duty on Indian corn depends on the price of barley. There is no connection between them. There is no reason why it should rise and fall with the price of barley. Suppose a proposition had been made at the meeting of parliament for the admission of Indian corn, what would be the consequence? Suppose the worst of things arise in



Ireland, which I anticipate as possible, which I am afraid is probable, what would be the feeling with regard to the great agricultural interests of this country, if I, a member of it, had positively refused to make the slightest relaxation in the law? But this I tell you, to touch the Corn-law in some slight point, like that of Indian corn, would be dangerous to it. I thought it would be unjust to relax it upon one article, and to confine it to the nobler species of grain, oats and wheat. Sir, I would rather keep the law intact and refuse to admit Indian corn, than come down to the House with such a proposition, and refuse to relax the duties on other descriptions of grain. I recollect the notice given by the hon. member for Winchester, which was brought forward for the special benefit of the agricultural interest. Would it be possible to relax the law in that instance, and refuse it in the others? Sir, I venture to think that it would be impossible, consistently with the true interests of agriculture, to take such a step. Sir, I have felt, as I said before, that when after the severe labour of the last session of parliament, almost every hour of the recess was devoted to calculating the chances that might result from the disease, and to collecting evidence on the subject, night and day, and adopting precautions against the possibility of the calamity which might result from such a state of the crop—I felt it rather hard to find myself the object of accusations that I was unfaithful to the interests of the country, or to any special and peculiar interest. I cannot, of course, but recollect the repeated manifestations of great confidence which I have at various times experienced—those manifestations cannot be without their effect on my mind—but notwithstanding those manifestations of confidence, the constant repetition of those observations to which I have adverted, of those accusations that I have been unfaithful, renders it absolutely necessary that I should allude to them. I have over and over again attempted to define the relation in which I conceived myself to stand with respect to party, to my country, and to my Sovereign, and it is necessary that I should again describe that relation. I see it over and over again repeated, that I am under a personal obligation for holding the great office which I have the honour to occupy. I see it over and over again repeated, that I was placed in that position by a party, and that the party which elevated me to my present position is powerful enough also to displace me. I see constantly put forth allusions to the power of those men to remove me from office. I am afraid that, with respect to holding the office that I hold, there is a very material difference between the extent of the obligation and the amount of the penalty. I am not under an obligation to any man, or to any body of men, for being compelled to submit to the sacrifices which I have submitted to, and to undergo the official duties and labours which I have undertaken. I do not underrate the distinction and importance of the position; but let us understand—and I am speaking not for myself, but for the many honourable men who have preceded me of different parties—let us understand what is the nature of the obligation we owe for being placed in office. As I said before, I do not undervalue the distinction and the power which are attached to the occupation of that office; but what, I ask, is its real value? It does not consist in the power of distributing honours, or conferring appointments. That power, it is true, is inseparable from the office of prime minister, and cannot be separated from it without injuring its authority; but the power of giving the highest rewards and the highest offices, is constantly accompanied by the invidious duty of selection, and the disappointment of those who may not have been selected. For my part, I value power not one farthing for any such privilege. I have served four sovereigns; George III., and his three successors. In the reign of George III., the office which I held was so subordinate, that it was impossible my services could have attracted his notice; but, as I have said, I also served his three successors—George IV., as Regent and King, King William IV., and Queen Victoria; and during the reigns of those sovereigns, it has been my fate to hold some of the highest offices in the state. I served each of those sovereigns at critical times and in critical circumstances—I did so with constant truth to each, and I constantly said to each of those sovereigns that there was but one favour, but one distinction, one reward which I desired, that it was in their power to offer me—namely, the simple acknowledgment, on their part, that I had been to them a loyal and faithful minister. I have now stated my view of the obligations which are conferred on those in power; but let me remark that there is that valuable privilege in power, that it gives constant and

favourable opportunities for exertion; and affords great facilities to the holder of it to render his country service, according to his sense of the public good. That, in my mind, constitutes the real value of official power; and I can say with truth, that I have never abused that power for any unworthy object. I have tried to use it for the promotion of the public interests and the advancement of the public good. I used it for the public advantage, and in doing so I cannot charge myself with any conduct at variance with the true and comprehensive policy of a conservative minister. Sir, I do not think it at variance with conservative policy, that I and my colleagues have attempted to repair the disasters of Cabul—that we have attempted to infuse into the Indian army that spirit which had been checked by the defeats and misfortunes of Afghanistan. Nor do I think it inconsistent with true conservative policy, that I have laboured to assuage that feeling of animosity which for a long time prevailed between this country and another powerful and great nation; and I cannot think that this paragraph in the speech of the sovereign,—“The convention concluded with France in the course of last year, for the more effectual suppression of the slave-trade, is about to be carried into immediate execution by the active co-operation of the two powers on the coast of Africa. It is my desire that our present union, and the good understanding which so happily exists between us, may always be employed to promote the interests of humanity, and to secure the peace of the world.”

I cannot, I repeat, think it inconsistent with true conservative policy, that we should be enabled to insert that paragraph, and that we should be engaged in trying to efface the recollections of the exploits of both countries in war, or extracting from those recollections every thing which savours of bitterness; that we should be trying to engage in a rivalry, not in exploits on the field of blood, but in an honourable competition for the advancement of commerce and civilization, and the improvement of the social condition of the people. It is not inconsistent with true conservative policy, that we should increase the trade of the country by removing restrictions; nor is it inconsistent with sound conservative policy, that we should reduce the taxation of the country whilst we increased its revenue. It is not, in my mind, inconsistent with true conservative policy, that we have extinguished agitation and discouraged sedition, not by stringent coercive laws, but by encouraging the idea amongst the great body of the people, that we, the rich and powerful, are willing to take a more than ordinary share of the public burdens, and to remove those burdens from the people so far as it is possible. Sir, believe me, to conduct the government of this country is a most arduous duty; I may say it without irreverence, that these ancient institutions, like our physical frames, are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” It is no easy task to ensure the united action of an ancient monarchy, a proud aristocracy, and a reformed constituency. I have done every thing I could do, and have thought it consistent with true conservative policy, to reconcile these three branches of the state. I have thought it consistent with true conservative policy, to promote so much of happiness and contentment among the people that the voice of disaffection should be no longer heard, and that thoughts of the dissolution of our institutions should be forgotten in the midst of physical enjoyment. These were my attempts, and I thought them not inconsistent with true and enlarged conservative policy. These were my objects in accepting office—it is a burden too great for my physical, and far beyond my intellectual structure; and to be relieved from it with perfect honour would be the greatest favour that could be conferred on me. But as a feeling of honour and strong sense of duty require me to undertake those responsible functions, I declare, sir, that I am ready to incur these risks, to bear these burdens, and to front all these honourable dangers. But, sir, I will not take the step with mutilated power and shackled authority. I will not stand at the helm during such tempestuous nights as I have seen, if the vessel be not allowed fairly to pursue the course which I think she ought to take. I will not, sir, undertake to direct the course of the vessel by the observations which have been taken in 1842. I will reserve to myself the marking out of that course; and I must, for the public interest, claim for myself the unfettered power of judging of those measures which I conceive will be better for the country to propose. Sir, I do not wish to be the minister of England; but while I have the high honour of holding that office, I am determined to hold it by no servile tenure. I will only hold that office upon the condition of being unshackled by any other obligations than those of consulting the public interests, and of providing for the public safety. Address agreed to.

## COMMERCIAL POLICY.—CORN-LAWS.

JANUARY 27, 1846.

SIR ROBERT PEEL moved that the House do resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, on the Customs and Corn Importation Acts, and that so much of her Majesty's Speech as related thereto, be referred to the same committee.

The House then went into committee, and the required portion of her Majesty's Speech having been read—

Sir Robert Peel said: Mr. Greene, whatever opinion may be ultimately formed with regard to the merits of the proposal which I am about, on the part of her Majesty's government, to submit this night to the consideration of parliament, I am confident that the extreme difficulty of the task which it devolves upon me to perform, and the great magnitude of the interests which are concerned, will ensure me that patient and indulgent attention without which it would be wholly impossible, either with satisfaction to myself or to the public interests, to discharge the duty which I have undertaken. I am about, in pursuance of the recommendation contained in her Majesty's Speech from the Throne, advised by her responsible servants—I am about to review the duties which apply to many articles, the produce and manufacture of other countries. I am about to proceed in the assumption adopted in that Speech from the Throne, that the repeal of prohibitory, and the relaxation of protective duties is in itself a wise principle. I am about to proceed on the assumption that protective duties, abstractedly and on principle, are open to objection—that the policy of maintaining them may be defended—but that there must be shown to be special considerations, either of public policy or of justice, to vindicate the maintenance of them. I am about to act upon the presumption that during the last three years there has been in this country an increased productiveness of revenue, notwithstanding the remission of heavy taxation; that there has been an increased demand for labour; that there has been an increased commerce; that there has been increased comfort, contentment, and peace in this country. I do not say, that these great blessings have necessarily been caused by any particular policy which you have adopted; but this I say, that the enjoyment of these inestimable benefits has been at least concurrent with your legislation—that the policy acted on has been sanctioned by the House of Commons—the policy, I mean, of repealing prohibitory and reducing protective duties—that I am not now, therefore, by carrying out that policy, about to call upon the House of Commons to recede from any course which it has taken. It is a policy which has received its deliberate and repeated sanction; and if it has been productive of public good, it will be perfectly consistent with the course hitherto pursued to persevere in that policy. At the same time, in advising the continued application of these principles, I am not about to disregard this other recommendation in her Majesty's Speech, namely, that in the adoption of principles, however sound, we should not be unmindful of the public credit; and that we should take care not to cause any permanent loss to the public revenue. That other recommendation also—that in the application of sound principles we should act with so much of caution and forbearance as not injuriously to affect any of the great interests of the country—will not be neglected by me. Above all, I trust, that the recommendation of her Majesty—the confidence, rather, expressed by her Majesty—that this great subject will receive the just and dispassionate consideration of the House of Commons, will be justified by the result. I have already stated, in answer to the question put to me by the hon. member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles), that I do not contemplate asking the House of Commons to pronounce to-night any opinion upon the whole or any part of the proposal I am about to submit to the House. It is the wish of her Majesty's government, that the whole of these proposals should be deliberately and dispassionately considered. It may be possible that I am about to affect so many interests, that all may unite in the conclusion that this is a rash and improvident scheme, and ought at once to be discouraged. If that be the prevailing impression on the part of those who are about to relinquish the supposed benefit of protection, nothing will be more easy than on the first night when we approach the serious consideration of the question, to invite the House to put upon record their approbation of some principle

contrary to my proposition; to meet my proposition at the outset with some such resolution, for instance, as this—not that protection to any particular branch of industry is advisable, but to resolve on a large and comprehensive principle—that protection to domestic industry is in itself good, and ought to be sanctioned by the legislature. It may happen, on the other hand, that the conclusion drawn by this House, and by the country may be, that, considering all the difficulties of this great question, considering the variety of opinions which exist, considering the nature of the contest which has long existed, and which I fear will long continue, unless a satisfactory and real adjustment take place—it may be that even those who dissent from particular parts of the great scheme which I am about to submit to the notice of the House may be disposed to accept it as a whole, and that the voice of the country may pronounce this opinion—"Upon the whole this is not an unjust, unequitable, or unwise adjustment, and rather than continue a perpetual conflict, we are ready to receive this as a settlement." If this be the conclusion to which the general opinion of the reasonable and intelligent of all classes shall tend, in that case I shall have the confidence of ultimate success. On the other hand, as I said before, if you touch so many interests by the application of that great principle, that protective duties are not in themselves abstractedly good, and ought to be relinquished—if all those interests should unite in opposition to my proposition—in that case, another fate will await it, and the sooner it is disposed of the better will it be for the public interests. Sir, that principle to which I have referred, namely, the relaxation of protective duties, I am not about to apply to any one particular class. I am not about to select that great interest connected with the agriculture of the country, and call upon the landowners to relinquish protection, unprepared at the same time to call upon other protected classes to relinquish protection also. In the confidence that the principle for which I contend is a just and a wise one, I ask all protected interests to make the sacrifice, if it be a sacrifice, which the application of that principle will render necessary. Sir, the House is aware that, during the last three years, the whole scheme of the Customs duties has been submitted to the review and consideration of the House. In the year 1842 it was my duty, as the organ of the government, to propose a great change in the then existing Customs of the country. The general plan upon which I then acted was, to remit the duties upon articles of raw material, constituting the elements of manufacture in this country. The principle of it also was to subject in general manufactured articles, the produce of the labour of other countries, to duties not exceeding 20 per cent. Not only in the year 1842, but at a subsequent period, the House adopted the principle upon which it acted in that year. Notwithstanding the apprehensions of a falling revenue, we did select some great articles, being raw materials, for the remission of taxation. In 1844, we reduced altogether the duty on wool. In 1845, we reduced altogether the duty on cotton; and there hardly remains any raw material imported from other countries on which the duty has not been reduced. The manufacturers of this country have now, therefore, an advantage which they have not hitherto possessed. They have free access to the raw materials which constitute the immediate fabric of their manufactures. I am entitled, therefore, to call on the manufacturers to relinquish any protecting duties they may still enjoy. I think there might have been great doubts whether or not you might not have continued to derive the revenue heretofore derived from the duty on the import on cotton wool, even if the duty which existed in 1844 had been continued. But the House appeared to feel that, with the continuance of peace, there would be no formidable competition in that branch of our manufactures. They disregarded the consideration of some £600,000 or £700,000 of revenue. They wished to establish the prosperity of that great staple manufacture of this country—the cotton manufacture—on some sure and certain foundation; and they willingly, therefore, consented to forego an amount of duty, so easily levied, and causing so little complaint from the great body of the people, without minute inquiries into the effects of the duty; and both with regard to sheep's wool and cotton wool they consented to the abolition of the duty, subjecting the opulent classes to the imposition of an Income-tax, out of consideration for the permanent prosperity of our manufactures. Sir, I propose, in taking the review of duties still existing, to which we are invited by her Majesty, to continue to act upon the principle which this House has sanctioned; and I take, in the

first instance, those articles of raw material which still remain subject to duty. I mean to deal with them in order still further to enable me to call on the manufacturer to relax the protection he still enjoys. Sir, there is hardly any other article of the nature of a raw material which is now subject to duty except tallow, and perhaps I ought to add, timber. With respect to tallow, which is of the nature of a raw material, and which is largely used in many manufactures of great importance to the comfort of the great body of the people, such as soap, candles, and other articles, I propose to begin by a reduction of the duty on that article. Russia is the country from which chiefly our import of tallow is derived. We import also some from the United States. At present, the duty on tallow is 3s. 2d. per cwt. The subject was adverted to in the course of the discussions on the tariff; and mainly with a view to our own interests, but partly for the purpose of encouraging Russia to proceed in that liberal policy of which I trust she has given some indication. I propose, without stipulation, that England should set an example by a relaxation of those heavy duties, in the confidence that that example will ultimately prevail; that the interests of the great body of consumers will soon influence the action of governments; and that by our example, even if we don't procure any immediate reciprocal benefit, yet, whilst by a reduction like that we shall, in the first instance, improve our own manufactures, I believe we shall soon reap the other advantage of deriving some equivalent in our commercial intercourse with other nations. I propose, therefore, to reduce the duty on tallow from 3s. 2d. per cwt. to 1s. 6d. I am taking the articles which are of the nature of raw materials. Now, with respect to timber: I don't mean to except the duties on timber from the review I am about to undertake. We have admitted timber, the produce of our colonial possessions, to be imported at a nominal duty; I am about to effect domestic interests by the relaxation of protective duties; and we have a perfect right, I think, if they be protected, to affect colonial interests. Timber is the only article respecting which I have some doubt. It is a very difficult question. I am prepared to make a definite proposal with respect to every other article. I know the advantage of early communication—that communication shall take place—but I am most anxious, in effecting reductions of the duty on timber, to ensure to the consumer the benefit of the whole change. The course which government will probably take, will be a gradual reduction of the existing amount of duty, where it shall rest a certain time lower than at present; the reduction being so apportioned, if possible, as to prevent any derangement of internal trade, by inducing parties to withhold the supply of timber in the hope of realizing a large amount of duty, and yet at the same time, as the importation of timber from the Baltic partakes in some respect, from the nature of the article, of a monopoly, to take care the reduction of duty should be an advantage not so much to the producer as to the consumer. In a day or two, after the opportunity of a more minute consideration of details, the intention of the government with regard to timber shall be made known. The subject, I have said, is a very complicated one; and it is very difficult to get the requisite information, as it is absolutely necessary to keep your intentions a perfect secret before you announce your plan. I trust, however, the House will be satisfied with my general expression of our intention to make a gradual reduction of the duty on timber spread over a certain number of years; but three or four days must elapse before we can more specifically announce our plan. These are reductions only, they are not the repeal of duties on articles of the nature of raw material. With these exceptions, I hardly know a raw material in respect of which there will remain any duty. Having now taken that course, having given the manufacturer the advantage of a free command, without any import, of the raw materials which enter into his fabrics, I call upon the manufacturers of the three great articles which enter into consumption as the clothing of the great body of the community, to give that proof which I am sure they will give of the sincerity of their convictions as to the impolicy of protective duties, by consenting to relax the protection on their manufactures. The three great branches of manufacture of which I speak, are those which are immediately concerned with the clothing of the great body of the people—I speak of the linen, the woollen, and the cotton manufactures. I ask these manufacturers at once to set the example to others by relaxing, voluntarily and cheerfully, the protection they enjoy. Sir, an hon. friend of mine, the member for Dorsetshire—and I assure him I shall still call him my hon. friend,

for it shall not be my fault if any unfortunate differences on political subjects interfere with private friendships; without any of the reserves and restraints which appear to embarrass him, I, therefore, at once call him by that appellation by which I have always addressed him—my hon. friend expressed a hope, being jealous of the expressions in the speech, that the small interests of the country would not be forgotten. My hon. friend said, “Her Majesty is solicitous that the great interests of the country should not be injuriously affected, but nothing is said of the smaller interests.” Now, I do not mean, in this review of the Tariff, to subject myself to the imputation to which I was subjected before. I mean to affect great interests, and, if possible, to treat with forbearance and consideration the smaller interests. I shall, therefore, fulfil my hon. friend's views and gratify his expectations, by assuring him that he will have no cause to complain that while the great interests are affected, the smaller interests are neglected. For instance, in dealing with the clothing of the great body of the people, I shall call on the manufacturers of the great articles of cotton, woollen, and linen, to relinquish that protection which they at present enjoy; but with regard to those articles which are made up, and which consequently employ the labour of the industrious classes of this country, I shall propose to treat them with more forbearance, and to continue some protective duty. As the case now stands, the great articles of the cotton manufacture, such as calicoes, prints, &c., are subject to a duty of 10 per cent. on importation; while cottons made up, such, for instance, as cotton stockings, &c., when brought from abroad, are subject to a duty of 20 per cent. With respect to cotton manufacture generally, which is now subject to a duty of 10 per cent., I propose that it should be imported duty free; and that duty of 20 per cent., which now applies to the manufactured articles of cotton in a more advanced state, I propose to reduce to 10 per cent. That is to say, that on the great articles of cotton manufacture, which constitute the articles of clothing for the great mass of the people, there will be no import duty; while the import duty on cotton articles in a more advanced state of manufacture will be 10 per cent. [A Voice: Take it all off: interruption.] The only favour I ask is, that I may be permitted to state the whole of the plan, without any inferences being drawn at once as to any particular parts. I may have to make qualifications—to adopt precautions, and the first part of my proposal may give rise to erroneous conclusions, unless judgment be suspended until the whole is explained. All I ask, therefore, is, not even that you should suspend your judgment to a future day, but that you should wait until I conclude my observations. I am the more anxious to call on the manufacturers to set this example of relinquishing protective duties, because, according to a very high authority, it was not the agriculturists, but the manufacturers, who called on the legislature, in the first instance, for protective duties. It was the mercantile and manufacturing interest which set the example of requiring protection; and it is therefore but justice that they should set the example, as I doubt not they cheerfully will, of relinquishing that protection. Nothing can be more remarkable than the observation made by one who had no prejudices in favour of the agriculturists. Dr. Adam Smith, speaking historically, says—“Country gentlemen and farmers are, to their great honour, of all people the least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly.”

I am speaking now of the origin of this protection; and at any rate Dr. Smith was a most impartial authority, with no leaning or bias towards the agriculturists. Speaking as an historian he states what, in consequence of the interruption I met with, I have the pleasure of repeating, that it was not the agriculturists who are responsible for the restrictive system, but the manufacturers. He says:—“Country gentlemen and farmers are, to their great honour, of all people the least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly. Dispersed in different parts of the country, they cannot so easily combine as merchants and manufacturers, who being collected into towns, and accustomed to that exclusive corporation spirit which prevails in them, naturally endeavour to obtain against all their countrymen the same exclusive privilege which they generally possess against the inhabitants of their respective towns. They accordingly seem to have been the original inventors of those restraints upon the importation of foreign goods which secure to them the monopoly of the home market. It was probably in imitation of them, and to put themselves on a level with those who they found were disposed to oppress them, that the

country gentlemen and farmers of Great Britain so far forgot the generosity which is natural to their station as to demand the exclusive privilege of supplying their countrymen with corn and butchers' meat. They did not perhaps take time to consider how much less their interests could be affected by the freedom of trade than that of the people whose example they followed."

This extract may excite the laughter of some gentlemen on the other side of the House; but I believe the statement to be perfectly correct, that restrictions did not originate with the agriculturists, but were pressed on the legislature in the first instance by the mercantile and manufacturing interests; and that the principle was afterwards adopted and extended, as a necessary consequence, by the agricultural interest. I may therefore invite, in the first instance, the manufacturing interest to relinquish protective duties. I propose also to call on the manufacturers of linen and woollen, the two other great articles in addition to cotton concerned in the production of the clothing of the great body of the people, to relinquish, as I believe they can without injury to themselves, protection with respect to the coarser articles of their manufacture. There will be some loss to the revenue by these reductions; but I believe that the importation of some articles, competing with the production of our manufacturers, will stimulate their skill; and with the capital and enterprise of this country, I do not doubt but that they will beat foreign manufactures. At present, woollen goods which are made up are subject under the reduced tariff of 1842 to a duty of 20 per cent.; and I propose that, as in the case of made-up cotton goods, the duty on those should be reduced from 20 per cent. to 10 per cent. In the cotton and woollen trade we have given to the manufacturers the unrestricted power of importing the raw material. The same may be said with regard to the linen manufacturers. Flax is free from any duty. I had occasion to say the other night that there is no duty whatever on the import of foreign flax. I propose that in the case of linen as in the case of cotton and woollen, the coarser articles of manufacture—those which are used by the great body of the people—should be permitted to come into the country duty free. With respect to the made-up articles of linen—there are some very fine, some not of general consumption, but partaking of the character of luxuries, such as cambrics, &c., and other articles used by the rich; but I do not propose even with respect to them to maintain the present amount of duty, but to place them all on a level with the manufactures of wool and cotton. I propose that the amount of the duty now levied on made-up linens should be reduced one-half. There is another article which does not fall within these principles, but with respect to which I think it of great importance, not that we should adopt the same principle, but yet apply to it a great reduction of duty—I allude to silks. The existing duty on silks apparently operates as a protection to the domestic manufacture. You have a duty, which is called one of 30 per cent., but which with respect to many articles is a great deal higher; and a false reliance is placed on that as a protection. It is no such thing. There are many houses in Paris and on the coast which will guarantee the delivery of goods in London at one-half the duty. The high duty is, therefore, a clear loss and encouragement to smuggling; and it is also a delusion on the part of the labouring classes employed in the silk manufacture to suppose that they enjoy a protection, of which they are in reality robbed by the smuggler and dishonest consumer. I conceive, by a new arrangement with respect to the silk duties—by a reduction of the amount of the duty levied on silks, we are not interfering with any domestic interests; but we shall, I believe, stimulate skill and industry in this country; we shall diminish the profits of the smuggler, and encourage lawful and innocent traffic, instead of one that is immoral and degrading. The general impression is, that the duty is only 30 per cent. on silk manufactures. I hold in my hand an account of the duties on silk manufactures; and though in respect to some the duty may not exceed 30 per cent., and in respect to others it may be less, yet there are many articles in respect to which the duty is much higher. In the case of crape, the duty is not less than from 43 to 50 per cent.; on velvet from 34 to 50 per cent.; on silk net, from 36 to 78 per cent.; on manufactured bonnets, 145 per cent.; and on turbans, or caps, at least as much. Does any man believe that a French turban, or cap or bonnet, pays that amount of duty? It is no such thing. The article is in common use, but it is introduced by the smuggler. I propose a new arrangement with respect to silks, but I must not at present enter

into too much detail. Of course, every proposal I make will be in the hands of hon. members to-morrow morning. With respect to silks, I propose to adopt a new principle. I propose, instead of the system now in operation, of high duties, after a general review shall be made, enumerating each article of silk manufacture, to impose on it a duty of so much per lb., or to an amount not exceeding 15 per cent. for every £100 in the value of the imported goods. The general principle, therefore, will be the adoption of a duty of 15 per cent. instead of that variable and capricious duty which is called 30 per cent., which is less on some articles, but which is vastly more on others. Now there is another manufacture which enters into competition with a manufacture of this country, and on which the duties are, I think, quite extravagant. I believe that a qualified admission of the foreign article will do no injury to the manufacturers of this country, while it will be likely to stimulate skill in improving our manufactures. But at any rate, I think, that after the concessions that have been made, the manufacturer here will have no right to claim the enormous amount of duty which is at present in force. I am alluding to the duty on stained paper, or as it is called paper-hangings. There is now a duty of not less than 1s. per square yard applied indiscriminately to all paper-hangings introduced into this country from abroad. Now I believe it is possible to sell for a farthing per square yard some descriptions of that paper. The very finest paper—a paper with gold embroidery—might possibly pay that duty of 1s. per square yard. But as some papers cost not more, I believe, than one farthing per square yard, the uniform duty of 1s. must be considered exorbitant. I propose, therefore, to reduce the duty on paper-hangings imported from abroad from 1s. to 2d. the square yard. I approach now those manufactures which are connected with metals. [A laugh.] Really it is impossible to give the necessary explanations upon those subjects without going into details, which may perhaps be calculated to excite the risibility of some hon. gentlemen. I must say, however, that I consider it my duty to enter into these details on this occasion. Now with respect to metals, we have greatly reduced the duties on foreign ores; and if we have any manufacturers who ought to compete with foreigners it is the manufacturers of metals. Speaking generally, all manufactures of metals are now charged with a duty of 15 per cent. *ad valorem*. Now I propose, with respect to them, as well with respect to all other manufactured articles which I do not specifically mention, that the general rule hereafter shall be that no duty shall exceed 10 per cent. The maximum duty, therefore, on all foreign articles, that I do not specifically enumerate, shall be, as a general rule, 10 per cent.; so that with respect to the great mass of manufactures subject to a duty of 20 per cent. by the tariff of 1842, I propose, as a general rule, that 10 per cent. shall be the maximum duty. It is of course, however, impossible that I could enumerate every article, as I have done in the case of paper-hangings, which I mean to except from that general rule. Within that 10 per cent. duty will fall all such manufactures as those of brocade, of earthenware, and other articles; and also all manufactures of hair. At present there is a duty of 20 per cent. on the import of foreign carriages. Now I consider the whole of those alterations to be a series of equivalents. I am giving advantages to the consumers of this country by the reduction of duties; and I will venture to say that there are no articles here so extravagantly dear as carriages. I am speaking of the prices of carriages in London, as compared with the prices not only in Brussels and other foreign towns; but as compared with the prices in Edinburgh, and some other parts of this country. I must say, that the prices here are most exorbitant; and, considering the command that we have of metal, and our great skill and capital, I see no reason why foreign carriages imported into this country should be subject to a duty of 20 per cent. I propose, therefore, to encourage a competition among the manufacturers of carriages in this country, by permitting foreign carriages to come in on paying a duty of 10 per cent. There is another article on which I propose a considerable reduction of duty. I propose to reduce the duty on candles of all descriptions. We have already reduced the duties on wax and on spermaceti; and I propose that the duties which are now levied on candles of all descriptions shall be reduced to one-half of the present amount. I propose also that the duties on foreign soap shall be reduced to one-half of the present amount. I propose that in the case of hard soap, which is now subject to a duty of 30s. per cwt.—I propose, that on account of the excise duty upon soap in



this country, the duty shall be reduced from 30s. to 20s.; that in the case of soft soap, the duty shall be reduced from 20s. to 14s.; and that in the case of Naples soap, the duty shall be reduced from 56s. to 20s. I really feel it necessary on this occasion to enter into these minute details, although many of the articles may appear to be of comparative unimportance. There are a great many articles on which I propose to remit the duty altogether. I propose, notwithstanding the great simplification that has been effected in the tariff of 1842—I propose to carry simplification still further. There were, I think, not less than 1100 articles included in the tariff, and they still remain there; because it is convenient to the custom-house officers to take the articles in the alphabetical order, and see whether or not they are to be admitted duty free; but, with respect to 500 of those articles, although they may stand in the tariff for the convenience of the custom-house officers, there is actually no duty levied on them. I propose to extend the same principle to many articles still remaining in the tariff; and subject to a small duty, by admitting them duty free. There are some manufactures still remaining, with which I must deal specially—that is to say, which on account of the present amount of duty, or on account of the nature of the articles, it may not, I think, be advisable to subject to the general duty of 10 per cent. With respect to all articles connected with the manufacture of leather, we propose to make great reductions. I take the important articles of boots and shoes. You have removed the duty on raw hides, and they are now admitted duty free. You have also removed the duty on almost every article connected with the tanning process; and there is scarcely any duty imposed upon any article connected with the leather trade. I propose, at present, to remove the duty altogether on one article that partakes more of the character of a raw material than that of a manufacture—namely, dressed hides. I propose, with the view of reducing the cost of an article of clothing, which is of great importance and of increasing importance to the working classes of the community—I mean the article of boots and shoes—I propose to take off altogether the duty on dressed hides. Then there will not be one single raw material which the manufacturer in leather cannot command without the payment of a duty; and having done that, I propose to diminish the duty on foreign boots and shoes imported into this country. I must here state, that the prices of boots and shoes in this country at present appear to be unreasonably high; and there cannot be any article of greater importance, or more essential to comfort. I propose, therefore, after having taken off the duty on the only remaining article connected with the leather trade that partakes of the nature of a raw material—I propose to reduce the duty on what are called boot fronts from 3s. 6d. to 1s. 9d. per dozen pair; to reduce the duty on the larger boot fronts from 5s. 6d. to 2s. 9d.; to reduce the duty on boots from £1 8s. per dozen pair to 14s.; and to reduce the duty on shoes from 14s. to 7s. per dozen pair. The duties on the shoes of women and children will follow the same proportions. I propose also to reduce the duty on foreign hats. I also propose now to carry into effect a reduction which was postponed in the year 1842—and, I am afraid, not wisely postponed—I mean, the duty on straw plait. I propose to reduce the duty on straw plait from 7s. 6d. to 5s. per lb., and the duty on straw hats from 8s. 6d. to 5s. per dozen. I said that I intended to propose a reduction on the duty on silk manufactures; but I propose also to reduce the duty on what I consider a raw rather than a manufactured article connected with the silk trade—I mean dyed thrown silk. I think it right to reduce the duty on that article. I think I am convincing the House that I am disposed to act fairly and impartially in respect to the application of this principle of the reduction of protective duties. I believe I have exhausted every article which can be called an article of manufacture, as the word “manufacture” is generally used; and I have stated the general principles on which I propose to act in respect of all articles of general use and consumption. I come now to an article of great importance, which although a manufacture, yet in common parlance does not generally fall within the denomination of a manufacture. It is an article in respect to which I think the time is come when a reduction ought to be made. I propose to reduce the duty on brandy and foreign spirits. The present duty on foreign brandy is not less than 22s. 10d. per gallon. It is an almost necessary article, and yet the heavy duty has prevented any increase of consumption. At the present moment, I believe the consumption of French

brandy in this country is not so great, or not greater, than it was at the latter end of the seventeenth century. I think that is mainly attributable to the exorbitant amount of duty compared with the value of the article. Now brandy, like silk, is an article in respect to which the present protecting duty is delusive. There is no article, speaking of our intercourse with the continent, in respect to which smuggling prevails so much as in this article of foreign spirits. A diminution of duty, therefore, is not necessarily a diminution of protection to the native producer. It may tend to prevent smuggling, and convert an unlawful into a lawful traffic; but a diminution in the duty is not necessarily a diminution of protection. I propose, therefore, that the present duty on brandy, geneva, and foreign spirits generally, should be reduced from 22s. 10d. to 15s. per gallon. There remains one article to which I will now advert, and in respect to which an arrangement was made only so recently as last year, but which I also intend to submit to the consideration of the House, and to include amongst the articles on which I propose to make a reduction of the protective duties. I allude to the article of sugar. I do not wish—indeed it would be, of course, impossible for me now to enter into detail on matters, each of which must become the subject of a long discussion. I submit to the House in outline at present the intention of her Majesty's government, avoiding details. I fear the proposal I am about to make may not at all meet with the approbation and concurrence of those hon. gentlemen who cheer my announcement respecting sugar. Last year I estimated the probable amount of increased consumption of sugar, in consequence of the reduction of duty, at 50,000 tons. The accounts for last year show an increased consumption of less than 82,000 tons for the remaining months of that year; whether or no during the period which would complete a twelvemonth there will prove to be so much increase as to bear out my calculation, I cannot undertake to say; still, there cannot be a doubt that there will be a very considerable increase in the consumption of sugar. The amount of free-labour sugar brought into competition with British colonial sugar, has not at all equalled my expectations. I calculated the amount of free-labour sugar, if I recollect rightly, at 250,000 tons; but the amount actually brought in for home consumption has fallen far short of that. I believe the defalcation may be accounted for chiefly by the failure of the crop in Cuba, and by the consequent increased price of sugar on the Continent of Europe, and the diversion thither of supplies which would have been brought to this country from other parts of the world in which there is free-labour. I believe it can be shown, when this subject is further discussed, that this will account, in a great measure, for the diminished supply. Still, I am bound to say, I think British colonial sugar can bear increased competition with sugar the produce of free-labour. I am not prepared to make any departure from the principle which I maintained last year with respect to the admission of sugar the produce of countries carrying on the slave-trade. I still contend for that principle; but with respect to sugar the produce of free-labour, her Majesty's government have not thought it right to exempt that article from the application of the principle which they propose to lay down with respect to other articles. We propose, therefore, assuming that the competition is to be with sugar the produce of free-labour, to deduct 3s. 6d. from the amount of the present differential duty. In the case of Muscovado sugar, the amount of differential duty is, I think, 9s. 4d.; in the case of clayed sugar, the amount of differential duty is 11s. 8d. We propose to deduct from the amount of differential duty in the case of each description of sugar 3s. 6d., leaving the amount of differential duty in favour of British colonial Muscovado sugar, competing with sugar the produce of free-labour, at 5s. 10d.; and in the case of the finer, or clayed, we propose to reduce the differential duty from 11s. 8d. to 8s. 2d. Now, in continuing this review of all the articles—at least almost all articles on which import duties are levied, I come to those articles which are connected with agriculture. There are many articles of first-rate importance on which there are very heavy duties, but on which these heavy duties do not operate as a protection. I will take the article of tobacco. In making the extensive changes which, on the part of her Majesty's government, I now propose, I do hope that public considerations will have due weight, and that we shall not allow ourselves to be persuaded, however cogent the arguments in favour of reduction on particular articles, into a forgetfulness of these considerations. I hope the House will bear in mind the importance of not breaking down the public re-

venue. The pressure this year upon the revenue, on account of the reductions which I propose, must be very great. Considerations of public interest—considerations of national defence, leave us no alternative but to propose an increase in the estimates. The House will bear in mind that I am on the one hand proposing reductions which will cause for the present considerable defalcations of revenue; and, on the other hand, it has become, in our opinion, our duty to propose, not with any hostile intentions, but for the purpose of provident considerations of defence, a considerable increase in the estimates. I wish these two facts to be borne in mind; and if there are duties extravagantly high still remaining on some of the great articles of consumption, I hope the House will not press for a simultaneous reduction of all. I will first refer to those articles of agricultural produce which are not immediately connected with the food of the people. I take, in the first instance, seeds of grasses and other seeds. I have a deep conviction that the reduction of duty upon agricultural seeds is far from being a removal of protection on agriculture, but on the contrary, will confer a benefit upon that interest. I take the article of clover seed for instance. Surely it would be impossible to maintain that the heavy duty which some years since applied to clover seed operated as a protection to agriculture. In many parts of the country the duty on clover seed is, in point of fact, a heavy burden. Before 1843, if I recollect rightly, you had a duty on clover seed which produced an amount of not less than £144,000. What a small portion of the agricultural districts of this country was benefited by the levy of that duty! Clover seed is required in those parts of the country where agriculture is most advanced; clover seed is required as conducive to the most improved system of agriculture. In some few counties of England clover seed is produced, but, speaking generally, the duty levied upon clover seed is not a protection, but a burden to agriculture. With respect, then, to all agricultural seeds generally, not for the removal of protection, but as a benefit to agriculture, I propose to reduce the duty, and to apply to all a moderate duty. The duty on clover seed was reduced one-half in 1842; at a previous period it had reached nearly £150,000 in one year; last year it was £75,000. As I have reduced the duties on the great mass of manufactures, generally speaking, to a uniform duty of 10 per cent., so with respect to all seeds, for the purpose of simplifying the matter, I propose that the duty generally shall not exceed 5s. per cwt.; that that shall apply to clover seed and to all seeds. In the case of leek and onion seed, the duty at present is not less than 20s. I propose with respect to all seeds, that the maximum duty shall be 5s. I have already spoken of that most important department of agriculture, the fattening of cattle. I believe it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of promoting the fattening of cattle, as instrumental to an improved system of agriculture. The restoration of the fertility of the soil by means of manure is one of the most bountiful of the dispensations of Providence, and I believe that there is no manure, bring it from where you will, which, in respect of its fertilising qualities, can enter into competition with that directly derived from the soil. You cannot conduce more to the improvement of inferior soils than by encouraging the feeding and fattening of cattle, and thus permitting the application of the manure to the increased fertility of the soil. I propose, therefore, that one article of grain, which, I believe, may be applied to the fattening of cattle, shall hereafter be imported duty free; it is an article, however, of immense importance—I mean maize or Indian corn. I propose that the duty on maize shall hereafter and immediately be merely nominal. Now, sir, I do not consider that by removing the duty on maize—I do not consider that I am depriving agriculture of any protection. Maize is generally used, I believe, in the United States; it is certainly used principally as human food, but its utility as human food is very much disregarded in this country. There are parts of the continent in which it is made into most excellent food, and there are parts of the United States in which it is preferred to some of the food we use in this country; but I do believe that, by the free importation of maize, so far from doing a disservice to agriculture, by promoting the feeding of cattle, an advantage rather than a disadvantage will be gained. I propose, also, that the article of buck-wheat shall be subjected to the same nominal duty as maize, and that the flour of maize and buck-wheat also shall be admitted free of duty. I propose also that the meal of these articles shall be admitted on the same terms as the grain itself. And if any hon. gentleman will ascertain the enormous sums which are now paid by

many of the best farmers of the country for the purpose of procuring linseed cake and rape cake, I think he will agree with me, that increased facilities for procuring articles used for the fattening of cattle will be of no disservice to the agriculturists. The demand for this linseed cake is so great that it is gradually rising in price, and the consumption on some farms is immense. On some farms I believe the chief object of its consumption is to provide manure for the better cultivation of the soil. The price of linseed cake, with which I will trouble the House, per ton, in 1843, was from £9 to £10; in 1844 it was £10 to £10, 10s.; and in 1846 it was £12 to £12, 5s. The price of rape cake per ton in 1843, was £5 to £5, 4s.; in 1844 it was £5, 5s. to £5, 10s.; in 1845 it was £4, 5s. to £4, 10s.; and in 1846 it had risen from £5 in 1843, to £5:17:6 and £6. Sir, I hold in my hand a letter from a merchant, strongly recommending, on account of its advantage to the agricultural interest, that there should be a free import of some articles used very generally in the United States for the fattening of cattle. He says:—Sir—I take the liberty of submitting to your inspection a small sample of an article called 'rice-feed,' which is very extensively used in the United States for the feeding of cattle. We apprehend that the Act 9th Geo. IV., applies to this article, and would therefore submit to your consideration whether the interests of the farmer may not render a cheap supply of it very desirable. It is the refuse of rice ground up, and is less costly than linseed cake, which is admitted free of duty. It is an article admirably fitted for the feeding of cattle; but, as it is meal, and not grain, it is excluded, under the operation of that Act."

Now, sir, I apprehend the admission of many articles of this kind, enabling us to enter into competition with the feeders and fatteners of cattle abroad, so far from being a disservice, will prove an advantage to agriculture. Sir, I come now to the consideration of those articles of agricultural produce which are immediately connected with the food of man; and this is the part of this great subject on which, of course, I anticipate the greatest difference of opinion. I have to meet, on the one hand, those hon. gentlemen who are for no delay or no qualification in the abolition of those duties; and, I have to meet, on the other hand, those who insist that there shall be no relaxation of the present amount of protection to agriculture. My object will be, if possible, to submit to the House some adjustment of this question, on which both sides, now so divided in opinion, may concur. I know that neither side will approve of it; I know that I must meet with the disapprobation, possibly the opposition, of those who sit on this side of the House. I may have to encounter equal opposition from the other side. I can assure both sides that my desire is, without favour or undue partiality, to suggest that which I believe to be just, and calculated to terminate that conflict, the continuance of which I think all must regret; to remove the causes of jealousy and dissension between different classes of her Majesty's subjects; not injuriously to affect any class, and yet to promote the general interests of the community. I consider that it is for the public advantage, at least, to lay the foundation of the final settlement of this question. Sir, I am not about to propose the immediate repeal of the duties which are imposed upon the admission of foreign corn. I am about to propose, as an earnest of the principles on which I shall proceed—I am induced to propose the immediate reduction of duties upon many articles of primary importance which constitute the food of man. And I shall first state those in respect of which I propose there shall be an immediate and total repeal;—with respect to all I propose that the reduction shall be immediate; but I take those first in respect of which I propose an immediate but not total repeal of the duty. I propose that the duties—and I am now speaking of articles of consumption for food—I propose to take an extensive review of all the articles included in the Tariff which enter into the consumption of the people, and I propose to make an immediate reduction in the whole of them. I propose an immediate and total reduction on some articles. I propose, on the part of her Majesty's government, that the duties shall be immediately reduced by one-half upon butter, from £1 to 10s. the cwt.; upon cheese, from 10s. to 5s. the cwt.; upon hops, I propose a reduction from £4, 10s. to £2, 5s. the ton; upon cured fish, I propose to reduce the duty to 1s. per cwt. I will now mention the articles of agricultural produce in respect to which I propose an immediate abolition of the duties. I propose an immediate repeal of the duties on all articles which constitute meat; that the duty on fresh beef, on salted beef, on what are called unenumerated articles, salt pork, and fresh pork, on

potatoes, on vegetables of all kinds, shall be repealed. From foreign bacon I propose that the duty shall be abolished absolutely and immediately. Upon all such articles I propose that the duties shall be forthwith abolished; that is to say, every thing that enters into the vegetable class, and every thing partaking of the animal class, that constitutes food as distinguished from grain, shall be at once admitted free of duty. I believe that in this respect the agriculturists need not fear any competition, nor do I think that they can reasonably complain of such a proposition, inasmuch as they must see that I have dealt with manufactures upon the same principle as I have just proposed to deal with agricultural produce. I have given the farmer increased facilities for meeting foreign competition by removing the duties upon agricultural seeds, and by admitting into the country such valuable articles as maize and buck-wheat. The increasing skill of the feeder of cattle will, no doubt, be considerably stimulated by that kind of competition which will necessarily arise by these alterations. I believe that these changes will give a considerable advantage to our country over any foreign country. I propose now, having reduced the duty upon what may be considered the manufactured article, to at once remove the duty upon the importation of cattle. In short, I propose in respect to all animals, as a general rule, that they shall be imported henceforth from foreign countries duty free. There is, therefore, I think, no necessity for mentioning the duties I propose to do away in respect to horses and asses, still less in respect to other animals. It is, I think, wholly unnecessary to continue the duties upon animals generally; and no one, I think, will question the policy of removing them altogether, as the maintenance of them has, I consider, operated neither for the policy nor convenience of the country. With respect to all animals I propose, as a proof of our adherence to the principle which we have adopted, and in relation not only to the manufacturing interests, but in respect also to the still more material interests of the country, that all animals shall be admitted duty free. Some persons have, indeed, complained of the manner in which the duties upon foreign cattle are at present levied. It is said, that it is not fair to levy an equal amount of duty upon the animal that is fattened and the lean animal brought from foreign countries. And many persons have expressed an opinion that an advantage would be gained in having free access to the lean animals. At any rate, my proposal will redress this inequality. I must say, I think that the increased means which will necessarily arise by these arrangements for fattening the cattle by the importation of grain, the increased facilities that will be afforded of getting lean cattle, and converting them into fatted animals for the food of the people of this country, will prove of the most important and permanent advantage to all classes. I do hope, therefore, that the manufacturer who may be disposed to find fault with my proposition, in respect to his own immediate interest, will consider this arrangement as affording him some compensation by the reduction of the duty upon fat animals. And those gentlemen who are, on the other hand, connected with agriculture will, I hope, bear in mind the fact that I have already proposed the removal of protection from some of those great and important articles of manufacture that are closely connected with the land. I do, sir, trust that they will always bear in mind that I have called upon the manufacturing interest first to set the example of relinquishing those duties. They will bear in mind, I hope, that farm servants and the humbler classes over whom they preside, will be thus enabled to command a greater supply of clothing at a lower rate than they could heretofore procure. By such considerations, I hope that they will not be indisposed to follow the example of those upon whom I have first made the call of relinquishing these protection duties. I will now, sir, state, with the permission of the House, the proposal which I mean to make upon the subject of the Corn-laws. I have already stated that I have exempted some articles now included under the designation of corn, from the payment of duty altogether—such as maize and buck-wheat. I propose, on the one hand, that these articles shall be permitted to enter duty free from the passing of the Act. On the other hand, I do not propose that there shall be an immediate repeal of the Corn-laws. But, in the hope of preventing any of those evils which might arise from so sudden and important an alteration, and with the view of giving time for the adjustment of those interests connected with agriculture, it is my intention to propose that there shall be a temporary continuance of protection to corn. I propose this arrangement under a distinct understanding

that, after the lapse of a certain time, foreign corn shall be permitted to be imported into this country duty free. Sir, I am deeply convinced that any intermediate proposition would be of no avail in effecting a settlement of this question; and, indeed, it would have been out of my power, as I have explained on a former occasion, to suggest any modification of the existing laws relating to corn, without at the same time guaranteeing their ultimate abolition. The choice left to me is either—what some persons so strongly contend for—the maintenance, in fact, of the existing amount of protection in every thing, or to take the other course, of laying the foundation for a decided and ultimate settlement of the question by a total repeal of these duties. I propose, therefore, that there shall be at once a considerable reduction in the existing amount of protection. And I also propose that the continuance of such duties so reduced shall be limited to a period of three years. I propose that this measure shall contain a provision that, at the period of the year when I believe there will be least inconvenience experienced, these duties shall terminate—namely, on the 1st of February, 1849. That at such period oats, barley, and wheat, shall be subject only to the nominal duty of 1s., which I have proposed in respect to maize and buck-wheat. The next question to be considered is this—what shall be the intermediate state of the law during the continuance of these duties? My opinion, I am bound to say, as to the policy of providing immediately an alteration in the present law, remains unchanged. I cannot admit that I have taken a very erroneous estimate of the wants of the people under the present circumstances of the kingdom. I deeply regret the existence of such a condition. The pressure upon the people will be somewhat great before the next harvest. I think that we are bound not only to look to the prospects of the next spring, but also to the consequences of that deficiency of food which I am afraid will be experienced. I think it is of great importance to take proper precautions, as far as we can, against the contingency of the people suffering from the effects of the present scarcity. It is possible that the results of this scarcity may be much more extensive than we contemplate. Sir, I wish it were possible to take advantage of this calamity for introducing among the people of Ireland the taste for a better and more certain provision for their support, than that which they have heretofore cultivated; and thereby diminishing the chances to which they will be constantly, I am afraid, liable, of recurrences of this great and mysterious visitation, by making potatoes the ordinary food of millions of our fellow-subjects. The deficiency here arises in respect to the food of millions. We have yet to consider what provision is to be made for this deficiency—what substitute we will offer to that suffering portion of our fellow-subjects. You may think the potato an insufficient article of subsistence; but you cannot, for a period of two or three years to come, dispense with your reliance upon the potato. You must, therefore, adopt precautions in respect to procuring proper seed for next year. I am not here now to propose that which I proposed in November last—the immediate suspension of the import duties upon corn. That might no doubt be done by an order in Council; but I think it very important to make such reduction in those duties as shall warrant us in expecting that assistance which is now unfortunately so much required. I wish to have but one law enduring for the limited period to which I refer; but I wish that law to take precautions in part, at least, which suspension would not give. I propose, therefore, that there should be, for the present and immediately, a great reduction in the amount of duty, and that the amount, as I said before, so reduced, should endure only for a limited period, there being a guarantee, by express enactment in the bill, that on the arrival of that period the then existing duty shall be converted into a mere nominal duty. What then shall be the nature of the law which is to endure for a limited period? My colleagues and myself have approached this question wholly unprejudiced, and with no other object in view than the general advancement and prosperity of the country. Our desire has been to propose a law, temporary in its enactment, which appears to us, on the whole, best suited to meet the exigencies of the present case, and best calculated to provide for the wants of the country during the period for which it is intended to last. The rate of duty under the existing law, on other descriptions of grain, has been regulated by the rate of duty on wheat. We propose, therefore, that the rates of duty on barley, oats, peas, beans and rye, shall be governed as nearly as possible, during the continuance of this law, if it meet with the sanction of parlia-

ment, by the principles which will apply to wheat; that is, that there shall be a reduction of a corresponding amount applied to all. But I propose, that immediately from the passing of this act, all grain, the produce of British colonial possessions, out of bond, shall be admitted at a nominal duty. I propose that, in all cases, those restrictions which apply to the import of meal from the colonies, the produce of grain, shall be removed. I presume they were established for the protection of the milling interest of the country. I believe them to be wholly unnecessary. They are not applied to meal the produce of wheat; I cannot see any reason why they should be retained for barley or any other description of grain. Now, on the one hand, then I offer to those who insist upon the immediate unqualified removal of these laws—I offer the unrestricted importation, at least the importation at a nominal duty, of all kinds of grain, and all kinds of meal the produce of grain from the British colonial possessions out of Europe at a nominal duty. There is one great article, the produce of the United States, an article to the free export of which the United States attach the utmost importance—viz., that of maize. I propose that that should be admitted duty free. This is the provision with respect to other descriptions of grain which we propose shall endure throughout the period that foreign grain is to be subject to duty. We attempted to meet some of the objections which have been made to the varying price of wheat; at the same time to fix any duty which would be considered available would not answer the purpose which I am desirous to attain, of making an immediate reduction, on account of temporary exigencies, in the present amount of price. We propose, therefore, that in lieu of the duties now payable on the importation of corn, grain, meal, or flour, there shall be paid, until the 1st day of February, 1849, the following duties, viz.:—

If imported from any foreign country—

#### WHEAT.

Whenever the average price of wheat, made up and published in the manner required by law, shall be for every quarter

| Under 48s. the duty shall be for every quarter . . . 10s. 0d. |       |     | 50s. . 51s. every quarter . . . 7s. 0d. |
|---|-------|-----|---|
| 48s. . 49s.   | ditto | 9 0 | 51s. . 52s. ditto . . . 6 0             |
| 49s. . 50s.   | ditto | 8 0 | 52s. . 53s. ditto . . . 5 0             |
|   |       |     | 53s. and upwards ditto . . . 4 0        |

I propose, that whenever the price of grain made up and published in the manner required by law shall exceed 53s., there shall then be an invariable duty of 4s. per quarter. That is to say, that there shall be no temptation to hold grain when the price shall exceed 54s., for the purpose of securing the shilling of extra duty. The enactments which we shall propose with respect to all other descriptions of grain will precisely follow the scale which we have adopted with regard to wheat. It would, however, perhaps be more convenient for the House, considering the time I have already occupied, that I should rather refer them to the details which will be printed to-morrow morning, than go through the whole now as regards oats and barley. It may be sufficient for the present purpose to state that the same general rule will be adopted in all. There would now, therefore, be levied on wheat, instead of a duty of 16s. one of 4s.; and every other grain at the present prices taken out of bond for consumption in the home market, would be subject to a merely nominal duty. That is the arrangement for the adjustment of this great question, which her Majesty's government are induced to offer for the consideration of parliament. We propose to accompany that arrangement with other provisions, calculated, I will not say to give compensation, but calculated, in my firm belief, materially to advance the interests of that portion of the community which, after the lapse of three years, will be called upon to relinquish protection. I believe it to be possible to suggest arrangements, not affecting the interests of other parts of the community, but materially benefitting the agricultural interests, and to introduce reforms in the levy of duties and the application of burdens which will be of material advantage. I thank the House for having permitted me, without interruption, to state all those portions of the law which might appear to bear too heavily. I am obliged to them for the forbearance with which they have permitted me to go through that part of this great question. I will now state what are the measures with which we propose to accompany this great present reduction and ultimate extinction of protection—measures which I believe

will be greatly for the advantage of the interest in whose welfare this country is deeply interested. Let us review some of the burdens which do fall immediately upon the land—the burdens which are, in my opinion, some of them, at least, capable of alleviation, not by their transfer to other parties, but by introducing reform in the administration of the expenditure. First, let me take the existing arrangement with respect to one great source of expenditure—to one great burden which is constantly and justly complained of by the agriculturist; I mean the amount of rate which is levied for the highways. Is it not possible, without subjecting other parties to the expense of the rate—is it not possible to introduce useful reforms into the administration of the expenditure, which shall be a relief to the landed interest? I believe it to be possible. What is the law and practice now with respect to the highways of this country? There are 16,000 different local authorities, each of which has the charge of the highways. These highways are becoming of increased importance as railways advance. In some cases the turnpike road is becoming of diminished importance, and the highway, for which each parish is subject, is becoming of increased importance; but what can be more defective than that, where the highway is a continuous channel of communication, passing between different parishes, the same highway shall be under the control of every different parish, and the total number of parish authorities is not less than 16,000? What is the advantage? There is the nominal advantage of the appointment of a surveyor in each parish, who absolutely knows nothing about the construction of highways. That each portion of the highway should be subject to a different parochial authority seems to us as most evidently opening a road to great abuses, to a lax expenditure, and to a bad system of repairing the roads. Sir, there is one Act of parliament which permits the voluntary union of parishes into a district authority, for the supervision of the roads. But as it is only voluntary, as it is merely a permissive Act, and as there are so many local interests affected by entering into the voluntary arrangement, the result is that hardly in any instance is the arrangement made.

What I propose—and I do it for the benefit of the agricultural interest, not merely as a relief from a burden, but as a means of greatly improving their means of communication—what I propose is, to make that which is now voluntary compulsory. I propose to compel the union of parishes into districts for all the purposes of the roads. The size of the districts is a matter of detail for further consideration; but we think that districts may be so formed as that we may have 600 local authorities, having cognizance of the roads, in place of 16,000, as we have at present. When, however, the local authorities shall have been constituted, we will permit them, or rather require them, to appoint a surveyor, a competent professional man, who shall have the charge of the whole of the highways of the district to which he has been appointed. There are some instances in which a voluntary union of parishes has been entered into, and some do now exist. I should wish to state to the House what has been the result in one of them of the substitution of a central authority in place of many parochial authorities. In a district of the north the parochial authorities, by their own consent, were superseded, they having 70 miles under their superintendence; and this was the result, as stated to me in a report I hold in my hand:—"The effect of the change has been remarkable. Formerly, the expenditure under the local parochial authorities, was from 6*d.* to 9*d.* per pound rental, and the money was literally thrown away. Now, the case has been completely altered. The roads in the whole of our districts, are as good as any in England; the management is good, and all is performed to the perfect satisfaction of the rate-payers, while the expense does not range higher than from 1½*d.* to 3*d.* in the pound of rental; while in the nine adjoining townships, in which the roads are not so good, it is from 4½*d.* to 5*d.*"

Well, Sir, that is not a mere transferring of the burden; it is an advantageous arrangement which, by the aid of the legislature, will relieve the agriculturists from a burden which presses heavily upon them without transferring it to any other. That, Sir, is one of the advantageous arrangements which her Majesty's ministers propose to make, and which we believe will prove a relief to agriculture. I come now, Sir, to a law grievously complained of, and justly grievously complained of, by the agricultural interest. I mean the present law of settlement. Under the present law of settlement, the population of a rural district, in times of manufacturing pros-



perity, is invited to emigrate to some great manufacturing town. The prime of a man's life is consumed in those manufacturing districts—all the advantages to be derived from his strength, his good conduct, and his industry, are derived by the master manufacturers in the towns. A revolution in manufacturing affairs takes place, a reaction ensues, and the trading and manufacturing interests do not prosper—then what takes place? The man, together with his family, who were removed from the agricultural districts in a season of manufacturing prosperity, are sent back to the agricultural districts; and that man, the best of whose life and energy has been spent in the manufacturing district, that man who perhaps had not been provident in his prosperity, must return to the rural district unfitted for rural occupations; that man, greatly to his annoyance and suffering, is transferred to a former home which probably he has forgotten—to a place with which he has lost all connections, and where he has not the means of getting employment—and not only is a great injustice inflicted upon the rural district, but a shock is given to the feelings of every just and humane man. We propose, therefore, not only to relieve the land from a burden, but we propose to do an act of justice to the labouring man by altering the law of settlement. We propose, Sir, that an industrial residence of five years shall not only give a claim to relief, but that after such a residence the power of removing him shall be taken away; and that his legal claim for support shall not be on the place of his original settlement, but on the place to which for five years his labour and industry were given. Now, Sir, I dare say many will remember what took place in 1842. In 1842 there was great distress in the manufacturing districts; the practice then followed was, that the person employed in manufactures who had a settlement in the agricultural districts, should be returned to those districts for the purpose of obtaining relief. Now, Sir, I conceive that the alteration we propose will be a moral improvement of the law, just in itself, and a great relief to the rural districts. It will be a great advantage to the agricultural interest, while, at the same time, it will be the remedy of a gross injustice under which the labouring man now exists. On the part of her Majesty's government, then, I propose that from and after the passing of this law, no person who shall have resided five years in a parish shall be removed from that parish; and that residence in a prison, barrack, lunatic asylum, or hospital, or any residence in a poor-house, during which the person shall have been in the receipt of relief, shall form part of such five years, and be no interruption to the period. I propose, not only that there shall be no power of removal to the land, but that the children of any person, or the children of his wife, whether legitimate or illegitimate, under 16 years, residing with the father or mother, shall not be removed, nor shall the wife of any person be removed where such person is himself not removable. We propose, therefore, that the children and the wife shall not be separated in such case from the husband, and that he who has an industrial residence of the term of five years shall have the right to relief for himself and his family, not from the place of his rural settlement, but from the place of his last industrial residence. At present, immediately upon the death of a labouring man in a manufacturing district, the widow can be removed to her settlement. We shall propose that, after the passing of this law, no widow who shall be residing with her husband at the time of his death, shall be removed within the ensuing twelve months. There is one point more. At present, when the working man is exhausted by the labours of a lifetime, an apprehension often arises in the minds of the parish authorities that he will become chargeable to the parish, and they immediately set about his removal. Now, we propose that there shall be no power of removal on the ground of chargeability, on account of accident, or by sickness, of a man or any of his family, from the manufacturing to the agricultural districts. Here again, by the alteration of the law which we propose I think that we shall be gaining a great social advantage, and also relieving the agricultural districts from a burden which is certainly very great. We propose to grant this relief, while at the same time we are taking means of preventing injustice being done to the man whose five years' labour has tended to enrich the district made liable for his maintenance. I approach now another matter on which we are prepared to advise an alteration, and one which I think can be carried into effect without loss to agriculture. In fact, I anticipate not only that the alteration will be an advantage to agriculture, but a benefit to all parts of the country. There is a dread—a natural dread—of competition on the part of

agriculturists. It is impossible, I think, for any man to deny that agricultural science is yet in its infancy in this country. But there are means of meeting this competition which is so much dreaded, by the application of capital, skill, and industry; and by the adoption of those means I feel persuaded that both the agriculturists and the labouring man will be enabled to meet the competition they will have to encounter; and, in order to facilitate this effect, we propose that the state shall encourage agricultural industry. Let any one read the evidence taken before a committee of the other House, which sat last session, and of which the Duke of Richmond was chairman, with respect to improvements on entailed estates. That evidence shows that in immense districts the means of improvement are greatly neglected. Among other means, I believe draining might be employed so as greatly to increase the produce of the land. There are many difficulties in the way—these are shown in the report of the committee to which I have alluded. Various schemes have been proposed to overcome them, some of which originated with my hon. friend the member for Berkshire; but, in addition to other sources of difficulty in making these improvements, there have arisen great difficulties in consequence of the necessity of the intervention of the court of chancery in cases of trust estates. Now, with respect to cases of these descriptions, we shall recommend that the public should, for the purpose of facilitating these improvements, advance sums of money to parties applying for assistance, not, however, subjecting the public to any ultimate loss; but advancing sums of money for the purpose of improvement, upon sufficient security. Now, I attach great importance to the principle that no loss shall fall upon the public. Besides the general effect of facilitating improvements in agriculture, by these means improvements throughout the country will be stimulated to an extent which would not easily be capable of being overrated. I propose the Exchequer bill commissioners should have the power to lend a given amount of money upon tangible security; and I should recommend that, to arrive at a conclusion as to the parties to whom money may safely be lent, you take advantage of a board lately instituted—I mean the board of commissioners of enclosures. I should propose that those proprietors of land who may contemplate improvements on their properties should make application to the enclosure commissioners to the effect, that they contemplate the improvement of their land by drainage. We have arranged that the preliminary survey shall be made at the expense of the individual who applies for pecuniary assistance in the manner proposed. We have, I say, arranged that the original expense be borne by the party applying for relief. We propose then, that after an inquiry has been made, after an investigation has been held by the enclosure commissioners, that upon a certificate being issued by the commissioners of enclosures it should be a warrant to the Exchequer-bill Loan commissioners to advance a certain sum, provision being made for there payment of that sum at a moderate rate of interest, and, at the same time, of a repayment on small instalments annually of the principle. These provisions are to be guarantees to the public of the repayment of both principal and interest. And we also propose that this advance be considered as a prior charge on the land—that it have priority on all other charges on the land, excepting in the case where any party who has a charge upon the land should think fit to make objection to such application being granted. I believe, however, that the cases would be rare where such objections would occur; because parties could not but feel that such an application for the improvement of the land would be a new guarantee for the security of their claims. Still we feel that when these advances are applied for, the power of interposing ought to be given to those having a preceding claim on the land; that they should have power to make an objection to that which would constitute a prior claim to their own. We propose, therefore, that parties having an estate in tail, or a prior charge upon the land, should have power to object to that which will constitute a charge on the land prior to their own, and that in that case the loan should not be had without the consent of the court of chancery. We believe that by an arrangement of this sort we shall be able to obviate obstructions that arise in case of entailed estates, wherein enormous expenses are incurred in appeals to the court of chancery, and a multitude of impediments are found to arise to parties seeking advances and loans of money from private companies. And we believe that this will be found to be

the foundation of great agricultural improvements. I confess I do not limit the contemplated amount of improvements that will be made to the mere cases on which these actual advances may take place. I believe they will be found to promote greatly the spirit of improvement; that when a man sees his neighbour having the cultivation of his land carried on under scientific direction—that when he sees him thus effecting great improvement in his estate, and this through the intervention of a loan or advance made to him on the part of the government, that this will tend greatly to lead to a spirit of agricultural improvement. This then is another mode by which we propose to enable the landed interest to meet the competition with which they are threatened by the law that I am about to propose. And now with respect to direct local burdens. Her Majesty's government have given their serious consideration to that subject, and on their part I must say that I cannot advise any material alteration of the system under which the assessments now take place. There is no doubt that there are immense sums of money now levied on land under the name of poor rates, which go to meet other charges than those for the relief and sustenance of the poor. Another objection is made; it is said, and said with apparent justice, that these are charges on the land, and that therefore there ought to be some great alteration of the manner in which these levies are made. In point of fact, the charges are not charges upon the land. So far as this charge is concerned, the opposition is not between land and houses; the opposition is merely between real and personal property, because it is not land alone that is subjected to the burden, but it is real property; including houses, and including mines, and quarries, and manufactories, which are subject to the payment of the assessments under this head. If, indeed, the government were to take the rate upon themselves, and levy it as a tax uniformly, it might perhaps be justice, and might be an advantage to make personal property pay. But recollect that this is a local charge and not a general charge; that the land would gain nothing if the property in Manchester, for instance, contributed to the relief of the poor in a manner different from what it does at present; that there would be no advantage to any part of Yorkshire, if the principal towns in England bore a different assessment, such as Halifax, Huddersfield, and Stockport, or any other town. It would be merely a different distribution of the burden within that locality. You may subject personal property to this charge; but if you do, you must make personal property so subject to it, not only in the towns, but in the rural districts. But how are you to levy such a charge for a small local burden? You cannot do so, as you do it with a great public contribution for a public purpose, like the income tax. You cannot, I say, do so; for when you come to levy minute sums for the relief of the poor, depend upon it that you will find, in the rural districts, that it is a kind of imposition which will not be borne; and so far from being a benefit to the land, to raise minute sums by means of an inquisition into a man's private circumstances, carried on and raised by the local authorities, would be a burden that would be felt to be intolerable. I willingly admit that there may be found persons possessing great property in large rural districts, and also in large manufacturing towns, and that personal property ought to be made to contribute where individuals are so situated—that assessments should be so made as to make these contribute to local charges, and that by so doing the burden would be more equitably distributed. This may be so; but I am not prepared to suggest a remedy by which I think this injustice can be remedied. I do not think it can be attempted; and considering that the charge is local; that if you wish personal property to contribute, there must be an inquisition into private affairs; and that if you choose to do this—then there must be not only an inquiry into the profits of the trader, but there must also be an inquiry into the profits of the farmer. You certainly had at one time a charge upon personal property in the counties—you had that, but what did it produce? You were obliged to abandon the charge upon personal property; for you found it impossible to collect it. I conceive, then, that it would be no advantage to the agricultural interest now to propose any such charge. I am sure that for the State to take upon itself the maintenance of the poor—I am sure that any such plan would be open to the gravest objection; that to alter that charge—to attempt to make it general instead—would be a change that,

In my firm conviction, could not benefit the land. I am not prepared, therefore, to propose any material amendments of the law, or the principle on which the rates are levied; but though I cannot propose any alteration in this respect, I think that there is a fair claim on the part of the land for direct relief from some portions of the local burdens to which they are now subjected—that there should be taken off some of those burdens on the land. I cannot maintain this proposition as a direct compensation to the land; but when we are laying the foundation for a great social improvement, I say that we may take and place upon the public some of the charges that are now thrown upon the land. Some of these charges were brought under the notice of the House last year by the hon. member for Somersetshire (Mr. Miles.) I was obliged, then, in opposing his proposition, to object that as long as the land was benefited by protection, I advised the agricultural interest not to claim relief from these charges—that the relief sought for was in itself comparatively small. But now, when it is determined to expose that interest to competition, then we have a right to look to these charges; and, when you have the power to do so, to relieve it to a certain extent; and in doing so, we have, at the same time, the power of conferring a great benefit upon the community, and for laying the foundation for a great improvement in the administration of the law. You have already taken off one-half the expense of maintaining prisoners in Great Britain and Ireland, who are under sentence for felony or misdemeanour; and I propose to relieve the counties of this charge altogether, and take from the consolidated fund the expense of the maintenance of such prisoners. I propose, in order that there should be a constant and vigilant check, that this and similar charges shall be provided for by an annual vote. We estimate the sum of which these will relieve the counties at £64,000 per annum. And now, in respect to the expense of prosecutions in England, one-half of that charge is already paid by the public treasury. In Scotland, the charge is borne altogether by the treasury, whilst in Ireland there still remains a portion of the charge which is borne by the land. We propose, in the case of England, and in the case of Ireland, that that portion of the charge of the expense of prosecutions which is now borne by local rates, shall be borne altogether by the public treasury. It is true, the relief is not great; but I think the change is of importance, as it undoubtedly affords increased means of establishing some control over prosecutions; and you will be amply repaid, in a social point of view, by acquiring that increased control over any sum you may grant. In Scotland, you have an admirable system of checking prosecutions, by means of a public prosecutor. In Ireland, you apply a principle of the same kind, by requiring that, in respect of all prosecutions borne by the public, there shall be the assent of a public officer of the Crown. Now, for the purpose of relief, and for the purpose of combining with relief the means of introducing an improvement of your criminal law, I propose that the whole of the remainder of that charge shall be taken from the land, and be borne by the country. The amount will be, in Ireland, about £17,000, and in England about £100,000 a year. Now, in the case of Ireland, if there be any part of the United Kingdom which is to suffer by the withdrawal of protection, I have always felt that that part of the United Kingdom is Ireland. Its capital and enterprise are almost exclusively directed to agriculture. And if, in the intended measures, with regard to the burdens on land, there should appear, at first sight, to be any undue favour shown towards Ireland, let us bear in mind that Ireland has not the means which other parts of the United Kingdom have of employing labour in manufacturing pursuits. But again I propose no relief from burdens which are not accompanied with some great social advantages. At present you have a great police force in Ireland. The expense of a portion of that force is borne by the land in Ireland; the expense of the remainder is borne by the public treasury; and it certainly is a most anomalous system for one portion to be borne by the public treasury, and the other portion by the land. I believe that it will be an immense advantage to place the police force directly under the control of the executive—to prevent the possibility of all interference by local bodies; to make it as perfect a system as you can, excluding all power of local nomination or local interference, taking the whole control on the executive government; and, in order that you may make that control complete, paying the expense out of the public treasury. This was strongly recommended last year by that commission over which the Earl of Devon presided, without any reference whatever to the law of protection;

and her Majesty's government are disposed to recommend to the House that the whole charge for that rural police in Ireland shall be borne by the public treasury. There is another charge borne by the land in this country, of which, again, for local purposes, we propose that a share shall be borne by the treasury. I allude to the medical relief in parishes. There is no part of the administration of the Poor-law which I think has given more dissatisfaction than the administration of medical relief. There seems to have been great unwillingness on the part of the guardians of the poor to afford relief, under the impression that their immediate concern was with the relief of absolute distress, and giving sustenance to those who were in danger of starvation. I am sorry to say that there have been frequently just grounds of complaint in respect to the administration of medical relief. The state of medical relief in Scotland occupied the attention of the House in the course of the last session. And, for the purpose of meeting the views of those who object to the present system, and for the purpose of giving to the executive government a greater degree of control over it, and gradually introducing an amended system, we propose to take one-half of the charge of the payment of medical officers upon the treasury. Thus we shall be enabled to meet the objection of those who demur to the exercise of government control and to the expense, by offering, on the part of the public, to contribute one-half. In that case I estimate that the amount of charge will be £100,000 in England, and £15,000 in Scotland. Ireland is under a separate law with respect to medical relief. I believe the whole subject requires re-consideration and that it is likely to occupy the attention of both Houses of parliament in the present session. With regard to Scotland, there is a separate charge, which I think is for the prison of Perth. The amount is very small, but the "principle" is what they object to. The charge of the prison at Pentonville is borne by the public treasury, and Scotland, therefore, objects to bear the expense of the prison at Perth. Now it will be a satisfaction to this feeling, even if it be no great relief, if we apply the same rule which is applied to Pentonville and Parkhurst prisons, and other prisons not immediately used for local purposes, and relieve Scotland from this charge by taking it from the public treasury. There is only one other item of expense which I propose to place on the public; and I think that in that I shall have the general acquiescence of the House. I believe that in every parish workhouse there is great ground for complaint, at least in many of them, of inadequate provision for purposes of education. In many workhouses there are no schools—in many others some person perfectly unfit to be intrusted with the education of youth is appointed as master or mistress, at a salary perhaps of £10. Now, we propose in no way whatever to interfere with the right of appointment. We wish to avoid the possibility of raising any religious question. The right of appointment of a schoolmaster or schoolmistress shall remain with the guardians of the poor. But we are ready to take the expense of providing proper schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. We require qualification. We require the right of dismissal and the right of inspection; but we are ready at the public charge to provide a competent and decent salary for those who are to have the charge of the education of the poor. We propose that a grant of about £30,000 a year shall be made for the purpose of providing competent salaries for schoolmasters and schoolmistresses for the children of the destitute in each Union, taking at least so much of control (without interfering with religion in any degree beyond what at present appears to be the case under the existing law) as to require that the party shall be competent—that there shall be some examination as to qualification, and some inspection of and control over the management of the school. Then again, with respect to the auditors of unions, we propose that the charge for the salary of auditors shall be borne in like manner by the public treasury, which will require about £15,000. Now observe, that, in almost every case in which I propose any remission of the burden which falls on the land, I propose also the attainment of some great object connected with the public advantage. If this general scheme which I now propose shall meet with the approbation of the House, observe what it does for the great body of the people. At a very early period many of the restrictions which apply to the importation of food will be at once repealed. Instantly, in respect to clothing, there will be perfect liberty to purchase clothing in the cheapest market. With respect to medical attendance, we propose an arrangement which, I believe, will greatly improve the administration of the Poor-law. Before these propositions be rejected, therefore, I hope

that both parties will well consider—even if their immediate views cannot be accomplished—yet, that both parties will well consider that instantly, with respect to many articles of food, there will be free importation. In respect to all there will be a perfectly free importation at an early period. In respect to all the main articles of clothing there will be free importation, with liberty to purchase wherever clothing can be obtained. And with respect to medical assistance, there will be considerable improvement on the existing practice. Well, these several propositions appear to me to be calculated to confer great benefits upon the country at large. Whether or no they are sufficient to induce both parties, those who entertain different views, to support them, I cannot undertake to say. I wish, however, that the whole should be fairly considered; that on each side you will well reflect upon the consequences of the immediate rejection of this scheme. I ask for the expression of no opinion at this moment; but I do hope that after an interval of some days we shall approach it with that entire consideration which shall lead to a fruitful result, and in the same temper of mind with which, on both sides, you have listened to my observations to-night. Now, let me conclude with two observations: one connected with our foreign policy and the interests of our commercial intercourse with foreign countries; and the other having reference to our own domestic circumstances. I fairly avow to you that in making this great reduction upon the import of articles, the produce and manufacture of foreign countries, I have no guarantee to give you that other countries will immediately follow our example. I give you that advantage in the argument. Wearied with our long and unavailing efforts to enter into satisfactory commercial treaties with other nations, we have resolved at length to consult our own interests, and not to punish those other countries for the wrong they do us in continuing their high duties upon the importation of our products and manufactures, by continuing high duties ourselves, encouraging unlawful trade. We have had no communication with any foreign government upon the subject of these reductions. We cannot promise that France will immediately make a corresponding reduction in her tariff. I cannot promise that Russia will prove her gratitude to us for our reduction of duty on her tallow, by any diminution of her duties. You may therefore say, in opposition to the present plan, what is this superfluous liberality, that you are going to do away with all these duties, and yet you expect nothing in return? I may, perhaps, be told, that many foreign countries, since the former relaxation of duties on our part—and that would be perfectly consistent with the fact—foreign countries which have benefited by our relaxations, have not followed our example; nay, have not only not followed our example, but have actually applied to the importation of British goods higher rates of duties than formerly. I quite admit it. I give you all the benefit of that argument. I rely upon that fact as conclusive proof of the policy of the course we are pursuing. It is a fact, that other countries have not followed our example, and have levied higher duties in some cases upon our goods. But what has been the result upon the amount of your exports? You have defied the regulations of these countries. Your export trade is greatly increased. Now, why is that so? Partly because of your acting without wishing to avail yourselves of their assistance; partly, because of the smuggling, not engaged by you, in so many continental countries, whom the strict regulations and the triple duties, which are to prevent any ingress of foreign goods, have raised up; and partly, perhaps, because these very precautions against the ingress of your commodities are a burden, and the taxation increasing the cost of production disqualify the foreigner from competing with you. But your exports, whatever be the tariffs of other countries, or however apparent the ingratitude with which they have treated you—your export trade has been constantly increasing. By the remission of your duties upon the raw material—by inciting your skill and industry—by competition with foreign goods, you have defied your competitors in foreign markets, and you have even been enabled to exclude them. Notwithstanding their hostile tariffs, the declared value of British exports has increased above £10,000,000 during the period which has elapsed since the relaxation of the duties on your part. I say, therefore, to you, that these hostile tariffs, so far from being an objection to continuing your policy, are an argument in its favour. But, depend upon it, your example will ultimately prevail. When your example could be quoted in favour of restriction, it was quoted largely; when your example can be quoted in favour of relaxation, as conducive to your interests, it may

perhaps excite at first, in foreign governments, or foreign Boards of Trade, but little interest or feeling; but the sense of the people—of the great body of consumers—will prevail; and, in spite of the desire of governments and boards of trade to raise revenue by restrictive duties, reason and common sense will induce relaxation of high duties. That is my firm belief. I see symptoms of it already. Our last accounts from the United States give indications of the decline of a hostile spirit in this respect. Look to the report made by the secretary of the treasury of the United States. It shows to you that your example is not unavailing. In the report made by the secretary of the treasury, Mr. Walker, a report containing very enlightened views on the subject of commerce, that gentleman thus speaks of restrictions upon the trade and import duties:—"By countervailing the protective system," says that gentleman, in the report to which I refer, "we injure our own cause, and we sacrifice our own agricultural and commercial classes. As well might we attempt to engraft a monarchy and an aristocracy upon our constitution, as to enforce a protective system in the United States. Let, therefore, our commerce be as free as our institutions. Let us proclaim our commerce free, and nation after nation will follow our example. If I were asked who began this system, I should answer at once, England began it by her repeal of the duty on our raw cottons, and the reduction of the duties on our bread stuffs; and although we cannot now take the lead in this enlightened policy, we may, at least, be amongst the first to perceive its advantage, and to follow it."

Here is an admission of the correctness of the course you have adopted in making reductions without stipulating or making any preliminary negotiations. You have reduced the duty upon cotton, and now the United States admit the time is come when they must follow your example. In other parts of Europe, where the form of government is totally distinct from ours, I can give you proof that your example is producing effect. I could give you the instance of a country as opposed with respect to the institutions of government as any country could be to the United States. In Naples, for instance, liberal views are beginning to prevail. I must say, in justice to the sovereign who now rules over that country, and who himself takes a personal part with respect to these commercial questions—I have seen a document written by him containing as free principles with respect to commercial intercourse as could come from any professor of political economy—and that he is constantly urging the relaxation of the duties which now apply to foreign imports; and I do not despair that, at a very early period, foreign nations will receive tariffs more favourable to our interests. In Norway, exertions to obtain a relaxation of duties are increasing. In Sweden, and many other countries, there is a disposition to follow the same course. Austria, too, shows some disposition, at least, not to follow other countries in their restrictive policy. Hanover, also, has taken her own course; and I do not despair of the early arrival of the period when your example shall tell upon the conduct of other countries, and when they shall quote our example of relaxation as a course for their governments in commercial affairs. I trust that this improved intercourse with foreign countries will constitute a new bond of peace; and that it will control the passions of those European governments who still indulge themselves in the visions of war. I do hope that the friends and lovers of peace between nations will derive material strength from the example which I have advised, by remitting the impediments to commercial intercourse. But observe, if that be the effect, I think in all probability that the continuance of permanent peace will expose us to more extensive and more formidable competition with foreign countries with respect to manufactures. During war we commanded the supply of nations. Peace has introduced not only new consumers, but also formidable manufacturing interests. In order that we may retain our pre-eminence it is of the greatest importance that we neglect no opportunity of securing to ourselves those advantages by which that pre-eminence can be alone secured. Sir, I firmly believe that abundance and cheapness of provisions is one of the constituents by which the continuance of manufacturing and commercial pre-eminence may be maintained. You may say the object of these observations is to flatter the love of gain, and administer merely to the desire of accumulating money. I advise this measure on no such ground. I believe that the accumulation of wealth, that is, the increase of capital, is a main element, or at least one of the chief means by which we can retain the eminence we have so

long possessed. But, I have attempted to show that abundance of provisions, and security (which is the main thing) for continued abundance, not only contributes to the accumulation of wealth, but that it is directly conducive to the alleviation of public burdens, by increasing the revenue; to the alleviation of local burdens by diminishing crimes; but, above all, that it is conducive to the spread of morality, by diminishing those temptations to crime which arise from distress and poverty. I ask you, therefore, to give your consent to this measure, not upon any narrow view that its principle is connected with the accumulation of wealth—I ask you to give your consent to this measure on far higher principles; on the principle that, incumbered as we are by heavy taxes, that, solicitous as we are to provide for the public credit, we feel the true source of increased revenue to be increased comfort, an increased taste for luxury, and that unseen and voluntary taxation which arises from increased consumption. I ask you to consent to this upon proof advanced to you, that abundance and cheapness lead to diminished crime and increased morality. I could adduce to you many instances of the beneficial effects of this comparative cheapness. It is said there is no danger of scarcity, and why then should we interfere? Now, what is scarcity? It is a relative term. That which is not scarcity to us may be scarcity to others. But remember this, the lapse of three years of abundance is an important era in the history of a country. Three years of abundance and comparative cheapness of provisions, have materially altered the circumstances and feelings of the people. That which was not scarcity in the hard winter of 1842, would be scarcity now. That which was not then a denial of comforts, though they might almost amount to necessities, would be felt severely now. There would be much more real suffering felt in 1846, after the enjoyment of three years of comparative abundance, by being now put upon a short allowance, than there would have been in 1842. Then, I advise you not to check the genial growth of that prosperity we have now enjoyed for three years. Do not mistake me. I am not insensible that that prosperity has arisen from the favour of Providence towards us. I do not say that without importing grain from foreign countries you could not have a sufficient supply; but I entreat you well to consider whether or no that should constitute a reason why, if there should be danger of an insufficient supply at home, we should not remedy the evil as well as we can by admitting imports from abroad. I was much struck the other day by an illustration afforded on this subject. I was told that in one battalion of the guards, in this town, there had been a great increase in the application for furloughs by the private soldiers, within the last three years; and that the furloughs granted in 1845 were nearly double the usual number. Upon inquiring the reason, I was told that the friends of these soldiers were in so much more comfortable circumstances than formerly, that the soldiers were continually invited to pass some time in the country with their relations, and that they availed themselves of these invitations. Now, this may be comparatively a trivial circumstance, but it seemed to me a striking instance of the moral advantage of a period of abundance in facilitating the intercourse of kindly feelings, and permitting those who are divided, and could not do so in periods of difficulty and distress, to revisit their homes, and return, probably, with feelings better qualifying them for the performance of their duties. I was asked the other night why I was disposed to disturb that state of prosperity which I have said exists? "If," it is said, "there has been during the last three years comparative abundance and prosperity, which have co-existed with the Corn-law of 1842, where is the necessity of disturbing that arrangement?" My answer is, that up to the month of October last all these indications of prosperity did exist; but in that month, and three or four months subsequently, there has been a considerable change. I find a passage in one of the trade circulars from Manchester which explains this state of things, and which I will read to the House. It is dated the 22nd of January, 1846. It says—"The anticipations which we ventured to make in our last annual circular, as to the prospects of the year we had then just entered upon, were fully realised for the first nine months, during which we enjoyed not only a continuance of the prosperity of 1844, but had reached to a degree unexampled in our manufacturing history—extending to every branch, and acting powerfully on the social condition of our teeming population. The causes which combined to produce this state of things were, as in the former year, steadiness of prices, with a demand constantly keeping pace with the supply; low rates



for the raw material, abundance of money at a moderate rate of interest, with a discriminating and careful management of our banking institutions; regular and full employment for all classes of our operatives, with cheap and abundant food, and the absence of any political event threatening either our domestic peace or foreign relations; to which may be added, the wise and comprehensive fiscal measures of the last session of parliament. Unhappily, we have lately experienced a reverse in several of these elements of prosperity, which, acting on each other, led to a state of embarrassment under which we laboured for the last three months of the year, and are still labouring, though in a mitigated form.

"Our home trade demanded, up to the end of September, was on an unprecedentedly large scale; but, from the causes above-mentioned, an almost total suspension took place for the two succeeding months, which have been followed since by a moderate business only."

We are not, therefore, to conclude that these indications of prosperity continued. I admit that this change since the month of October is one of the grounds on which I have adopted the conclusion to which I have come. These, Mr. Greene, are the proposals which, on the part of the government, I offer for the adjustment—the ultimate adjustment of this question. I cannot appeal to any ungenerous feeling—I cannot appeal to fear, or to any thing which will be calculated to exercise an undue sway over the reason of those to whom these proposals are made. There may be agitation, but it is not one which has reached the great mass of the labouring classes, there being among them a total absence of all excitement. I admit it is perfectly possible that, without danger to the public peace, we might continue the existing duties; therefore I cannot appeal to fear as a ground for agreeing to these proposals. But this I do say—there has been a great change in the opinion of the great mass of the community with respect to the Corn-laws. There is between the master manufacturers and the operative classes a common conviction that did not prevail in 1842 or at a former period—that it will be for the public advantage that these laws should be repealed; and while there is that union of sentiment between them, there appears at the same time to be a general contentment and loyalty, and a confidence in your justice and impartiality. As far as I can judge, the example which you set in taking on yourselves great pecuniary burdens, in order that you might relieve the labouring classes from the taxation they are subject to, has produced the deepest impression and the most beneficial effect on their minds; and they have a perfect confidence, as I said before, in your justice and wisdom. But because this is a time of peace; because there is a perfect calm, except so far as an agitation among the principal manufacturers may interrupt it; because you are not subject to any coercion whatever, I entreat you to bear in mind that the aspect of affairs may change; that we may have to contend with worse harvests than that of this year; and that it may be wise to avail ourselves of the present moment to effect an adjustment which I believe must be ultimately made, and which could not be long delayed without engendering feelings of animosity between different classes of her Majesty's subjects. From a sincere conviction that the settlement is not to be delayed—that, accompanied with the precautionary measures to which I have referred, it will not inflict injury on the agricultural interest—from those feelings I should deeply lament, exclusively on public grounds, the failure of the attempt which, at the instance of her Majesty's government, I have made on this occasion to recommend to your calm and dispassionate consideration these proposals, with no other feeling or interest in the ultimate issue than that they may, to use the words of her Majesty's speech, conduce to the promotion "of friendly feelings between different classes, to provide additional security for the continuance of peace, and to maintain contentment and happiness at home, by increasing the comforts and bettering the condition of the great body of the people." The right hon. baronet concluded by moving the following resolution:—Resolved—That in lieu of the duties now payable on the importation of corn, grain, meal, or flour, there shall be paid until the 1st day of February, 1849, the following duties, viz.—[Here follows a long list of the various articles included in the new tariff].

A conversation ensued as to the most convenient day for discussing the resolution, which was fixed for Monday, February 9, and the House adjourned.

FEBRUARY 9, 1846.

On the motion that the Speaker do leave the chair to go into committee on the Customs and Corn importation Act—Mr. Miles proposed as an amendment, "That this House will, upon this day six months, resolve itself into the said committee." At the close of the fifth night's debate,—

SIR ROBERT PEEL again spoke as follows:—Mr. Speaker, Two matters of great importance have occupied the attention of the House during this protracted debate—the one, the manner in which a party should be conducted; the other, the measures by which an imminent public calamity shall be mitigated, and the principles by which the commercial policy of a great empire shall for the future be governed. On the first point, the manner in which a party should be conducted by far the greater part of this debate has turned. I do not undervalue its importance, but, great as it is, surely it is subordinate in the eyes of a people to that other question to which I have referred—the precautions to be taken against impending scarcity, and the principles by which your commercial policy shall hereafter be governed. On the party question I have little defence to make. Yes, Sir, these are, I admit at once, the worst measures for party interests that could have been brought forward. I admit also that it is unfortunate that the conduct of this measure, so far as the Corn-laws are concerned, should be committed to my hands. It would no doubt, have been far preferable, that those should have the credit, if credit there be, for an adjustment of the Corn-laws, who have been uniform and consistent opponents of those laws. That which prevented myself and those who concurred with me from committing it at once to other hands, was the firm conviction under which we laboured that a part of this empire was threatened with a great calamity. I did firmly believe, I do firmly believe, that there is impending over you a calamity that all will deplore. I did think that while there was that danger, and while I had the hopes of averting it, it would not be consistent with my duty to my Sovereign, or with the honour of a public man, to take that opportunity of shrinking from the heavy responsibilities which it imposed. While I retained the hope of acting with a united administration, while I thought there was a prospect of bringing this question to a settlement, I determined to retain office and incur its responsibilities. When I was compelled to abandon that hope (my sense of the coming evil remaining the same,) I took the earliest opportunity, consistent with a sense of duty and of public honour, of tendering my resignation to the Queen, and leaving her Majesty the full opportunity of consulting other advisers. I offered no opinion as to the choice of a successor. That is almost the only act which is the personal act of the Sovereign; it is for the Sovereign to determine in whom her confidence shall be placed. It was, indeed, my duty to ascertain, by the command of the Queen, whether those of my colleagues who had dissented from me were either themselves prepared to form a government, or to advise her Majesty, if they themselves were not prepared, to commit to other hands, the formation of a government—a government, I mean, to be composed of public men favourable to the maintenance of the existing Corn-law. Those from whom I differed, who had not concurred with me either as to the full extent of the danger to be apprehended, or as to the policy of altering the law, signified their opinion that it would not be for the public interests that they should form a government; nor could they advise her Majesty to resort to others for the formation of a government founded on the maintenance of the existing Corn-law. Her Majesty determined to call upon the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) to undertake the duty of forming an administration. My firm belief was that the noble lord would have undertaken that duty; my firm persuasion was—the noble lord will excuse me for saying so—that he would have succeeded if he had undertaken it. During the long course of my opposition to the noble lord, I cannot charge myself with having ever said anything disrespectful of him. We have acted against each other for many years, and I don't recollect anything that ever passed between us likely to engender hostile or acrimonious feelings. But I must say, the noble lord did disappoint me when he did not at once undertake the formation of a government on the principle of adjusting this question. When my tender of resignation had been accepted, and when the noble lord had been sent for by the Queen, I considered myself at perfect liberty to act in a private capacity on my own personal sense

of the public interests and my own feelings of public duty. I knew all the difficulties with which any man would have to contend who undertook the conduct of the government. I knew there must be a great dislocation of parties. In the firm persuasion that the noble lord would accept the office of first minister, I felt it incumbent upon me, under the special circumstances under which he would have undertaken office, to diminish the difficulties with which he might have to contend, in attempting a final settlement of the Corn-laws. I resolved, therefore, to give the noble lord such assurances of support as it was in my power to give. In the explanation which I offered the other night, I limited myself to a detail of the facts which had preceded my retirement from office. The noble lord's explanation commenced from that period. Of that explanation I have no complaint whatever to make. It was perfectly fair and candid on the part of the noble lord. But there are additions to it which I am desirous of supplying, in the hope of being able to demonstrate that I had no wish to defraud others of the credit of adjusting the Corn-laws. My resignation of office was accepted by her Majesty on the 6th of December last. On the 8th December, I addressed to her Majesty the following communications, for the express purpose of enabling her Majesty, by the knowledge of my views and intentions with regard to the Corn-laws, to diminish the difficulties of my successor:—

“ WHITEHALL, Dec. 8, 1845.

“ Sir Robert Peel presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and, influenced by no other motive than the desire to contribute, if possible, to the relief of your Majesty from embarrassment, and to the protection of the public interests from injury, is induced to make to your Majesty this confidential communication explanatory of Sir Robert Peel's position and intentions with regard to the great question which is now agitating the public mind.

“ Your Majesty can, if you think fit, make this communication known to the minister who, as successor to Sir Robert Peel, may be honoured by your Majesty's confidence.

“ On the 1st of November last, Sir Robert Peel advised his colleagues, on account of the alarming accounts from Ireland, and many districts in this country, as to the failure of the potato crop from disease, and for the purpose of guarding against contingencies, which in his opinion were not improbable, humbly to recommend to your Majesty that the duties on the import of foreign grain should be suspended for a limited period, either by order in council, or by legislative enactment; parliament, in either case, being summoned without delay.

“ Sir Robert Peel foresaw that this suspension, fully justified by the tenor of the report to which he has referred, would compel, during the interval of suspension, the reconsideration of the Corn-laws.

“ If the opinions of his colleagues had then been in concurrence with his own, he was fully prepared to take the responsibility of suspension—and of the necessary consequence of suspension, a comprehensive review of the laws imposing restrictions on the import of foreign grain and other articles of food, with a view to their gradual diminution and ultimate removal.

“ He was disposed to recommend that any new laws to be enacted should contain within themselves the principle of gradual reduction and final repeal.

“ Sir Robert Peel is prepared to support, in a private capacity, measures which may be in general conformity with those which he advised as a minister.

“ It would be unbecoming in Sir Robert Peel to make any reference to the details of such measures.

“ Your Majesty has been good enough to inform Sir Robert Peel that it is your intention to propose to Lord John Russell to undertake the formation of a government.

“ The principle on which Sir Robert Peel was prepared to recommend the reconsideration of the laws affecting the import of the main articles of food, was in general accordance with that referred to in the concluding paragraph of Lord John Russell's letter to the electors of the city of London.

“ Sir Robert Peel wished to accompany the removal of restriction on the admission of such articles, with relief to the land from any charges that may be unduly onerous, and with such other provisions as, in the terms of Lord John Russell's letter, ‘ caution and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest.’

"Sir Robert Peel will support measures founded on that general principle, and will exercise any influence he may possess to promote their success."

That was the assurance I conveyed to her Majesty of my perfect readiness to support, if proposed by others, those measures which I had myself deemed necessary. I could not but foresee that in addition to all the other difficulties with which the noble lord or any other minister would have to contend, there would be some connected with the state of our revenue and expenditure. At the close of the present financial year there will probably be, as there has been in the years preceding, a considerable surplus of revenue after providing for the wants of the public service. In the coming year there must be increased estimates, reducing the future surplus, and I thought it right that my successor should not be exposed to the risk of an unfavourable contrast for which he could not be responsible. I added, therefore, to my assurance of support with respect to the Corn-laws this further assurance. It refers to points of great delicacy, but it is better to have no concealment or reserve.

"Sir Robert Peel feels it to be his duty to add that, should your Majesty's future advisers, after consideration of the heavy demands made upon the army of this country for colonial service, of our relations with the United States, and of the bearing which steam navigation may have upon maritime warfare and the defence of the country, deem it advisable to propose an addition to the army and increased naval and military estimates, Sir Robert will support the proposal—will do all that he can to prevent it from being considered as indicative of hostile or altered feelings towards France, and will assume, for the increase in question, any degree of responsibility, present or retrospective, which can fairly attach to him."

Now, when it is charged on me, that I am robbing others of the credit which is justly due to them, I hope that this explanation of the course I pursued, when I was acting under the firmest persuasion that the adjustment of this question would be committed to others, may tend to prove that I was not desirous of robbing others of the credit of settling this question, or of trying to embarrass their course. There were further communications made, and in the course of those communications it was proposed to put me in possession of the particular mode in which the noble lord intended to arrange this question. I thought that it would be better that I should not be made acquainted with such details. I thought that my knowledge of them, or any appearance of concert between the noble lord and myself, would have had the tendency rather to prejudice than promote the adjustment of this question. I, therefore, declined to receive the communication of those details; but I think that the noble lord must have been satisfied that, though I declined to concert particular measures with him, yet it was my intention to give to the noble lord, in his attempt to adjust this question according to his own views of public policy, that same cordial support which it is his boast he now intends to give me. I believe that must have been the impression of the noble lord—[Lord J. Russell: Hear, hear!]  
—because, after the communications with me, the noble lord undertook the formation of a government; and I am sure that the noble lord will admit that no act of mine caused the failure of the noble lord's attempt, and that I was in no way concerned in the reasons which induced the noble lord finally to abandon it. I made no inquiry as to the persons who should constitute the new government; I had no personal objections of any kind. My conviction was, that this question ought to be adjusted. I was prepared to facilitate its adjustment by others by my vote, and by the exercise of whatever influence I could command. So much for my conduct towards political opponents—better entitled than myself to undertake the repeal of the Corn-laws.

Now, Sir, with respect to the course which I have pursued towards those who so long have given me their support. I admit to them that it is but natural that they should withhold from me their confidence. I admit that the course which I am pursuing is at variance with the principles on which party is ordinarily conducted. But I do ask of them, whether it be probable that I would sacrifice their favourable opinion and their support, unless I was influenced by urgent considerations of public duty—unless I was deeply impressed with the necessity of taking these precautions, and advising these measures. Notwithstanding that which may have passed in this debate—notwithstanding the asperity with which some have spoken, I will do that

party (which has hitherto supported me) the justice they deserve. No person can fill the situation I fill, without being aware of the motives by which a great party is influenced. I must have an opportunity of knowing what are the personal objects of those around me; and this I will say, notwithstanding the threatened forfeiture of their confidence, that I do not believe (speaking generally of the great body of the party) that there ever existed a party influenced by more honourable and disinterested feelings.

While I admit that the natural consequence of the course I have pursued, is to offend, probably to alienate, a great party, I am not the less convinced that any other course would have been ultimately injurious even to party interests. I know what would have conciliated temporary confidence. It would have been to underrate the danger in Ireland, to invite a united combination for the maintenance of the existing Corn-law, to talk about hoisting the flag of protection for native industry, to insist that agricultural protection should be maintained in all its integrity—by such a course I should have been sure to animate and please a party, and to gain for a time their cordial approbation. But the month of May will not arrive without demonstrating that I should thereby have abandoned my duty to my country—to my Sovereign—ay, and to the conservative party. I had, and have, the firm persuasion that the present temper of the public mind—the state of public feeling, and of public opinion, with respect to the Corn-laws—*independent of all adventitious circumstances*, make the defence of the Corn-laws a very difficult task. But with such a calamity as that which is impending in Ireland, it was utterly irreconcilable with my feelings to urge the landed interest to commit themselves to a conflict for the maintenance inviolate of a law which attaches at the present time a duty of 17*s.* to the quarter of wheat. What were the facts which came under the cognizance of my right hon. friend the secretary of state for the home department, charged with the responsibility of providing for the public peace, and rescuing millions from the calamity of starvation? We were assured in one part of this empire there are 4,000,000 of the Queen's subjects dependent on a certain article of food for subsistence. We knew that on that article of food no reliance could be placed. It was difficult to say what was the extent of the danger—what would be the progress of the disease, and what the amount of deficiency in the supply of that article of food. But, surely, you will make allowances for those who were charged with the heaviest responsibility, if their worst anticipations should be realized by the event. We saw, in the distance, the gaunt forms of famine, and of disease following in the train of famine. Was it not our duty to the country, ay, our duty to the party that supported us, to avert the odious charge of indifference and neglect of timely precautions? It is absolutely necessary, before you come to a final decision on this question, that you should understand this Irish case. You must do so. The reading of letters may be distasteful to you; but you shall have no ground for imputing it to me that I left you in ignorance of a danger which I believe to be imminent. I may have lost your confidence—I will not try to regain it at the expense of truth. I can conciliate no favour by the expression of regret for the course I have taken. So far from it, I declare, in the face of this House that the day of my public life, which I look back on with the greatest satisfaction and pride, is that 1st of November last, when I offered to take the responsibility of issuing an order in council to open the ports, and to trust to you for approval and indemnity. I wished then, that by the first packet which sailed after the 1st of November, the news might have gone forth that the ports were open. The primary object of such a measure, of course, would have been to increase the supply of food, and to take precautions against famine, although other collateral advantages might have flowed from it. Had we opened the ports, and had our anticipations proved to be incorrect—had the result shown that we had formed a false estimate of this danger—I believe that the generosity of parliament would have protected us from censure. ["Hear, hear."] That would have been the case had our anticipations proved to be wrong; but what is the fact? During the latter part of December and January, there was a temporary suspension of alarm, after the opinions we had received from men eminent in science. I never shared in the sanguine hopes that there would be abundance of food, that the potato disease was exaggerated, and that we might safely trust to existing supplies. I felt that the time would arrive when

the opinions of those individuals would be justified. And what is the fact? I will read to you some communications, not so much for the vindication of the government as for the guidance of your own future course. It is not right that I should leave you in ignorance of the real facts of this case. ["Hear, hear."] It is true the present proposition is not a suspension of the duties, but it is a virtual suspension. It comprehends the removal of the duty on maize and rice, and the reduction of the duty to a nominal amount on barley and oats, and the reduction of the duty on wheat from 17s. to 4s. Before you decide on rejecting or delaying this measure, hear and consider the reports which the last few days have brought from Ireland. You seemed to discredit the reports of official authorities; and some, I regret to say, countenanced the notion that public men were base enough to act in concert for the purpose of exaggeration. I will now read, therefore, no reports from the Lord-lieutenant. I will read letters which the last two mails have brought from Ireland, from men from whose statements you cannot have the pretence of withholding confidence. I will first read a communication from Sir David Roche, who was for some time member for the city of Limerick. He was one of those who at first thought the apprehension of famine to be greatly exaggerated, and that extraordinary precautions were unnecessary. This day has brought me this letter from him, dated Carass, near Limerick, Feb. 11 :—"No person was more disposed than I was to look with hope to that part of the potato crop in this country that appeared sound before Christmas. I thought it was quite safe and certain to keep in the usual way, and in my answer to the Lord-lieutenant's circular I stated that hope with great confidence, adding that the crop was so large, the sound portion would nearly feed the people." (This, then, is a disinterested authority.) "But I grieve to say, that every day convinces me of the error I was under; the potatoes that were apparently sound then, had more or less the disease in an incipient state, and the greater part is now obliged to be given to pigs and cattle, to save the owners from total loss. The Catholic clergy of several parishes have made this painful communication to me; my own experience as a landed proprietor and a practical farmer, holding in my possession large animal farms in three different parts of this county, and also in the county Clare, entirely corresponds with their statements. I don't think by the first of May next, that out of one hundred acres of potatoes on my land, sound seed will be left me for next year's crop.

"If the case is so bad with me, and it is nearly the same in the four districts I allude to, how much worse must it be with the poor, who have not the convenience and aid that large farming establishments, with substantial buildings, can command? In short, as one rides through the country, rotten potatoes are to be seen everywhere in large quantities by the side of the roads; pits, lately turned, in most cases much smaller than the heaps of rotten potatoes alongside them; and those in the pits are certain, if not quickly consumed, to share in the general decay.

"Such, sir, is the state I may say of the entire country. No doubt for six or seven weeks, while the remains of the potatoes last, destitution will not be general; but I pray you, sir, look to it in time."

There were some of us who did look to it in time, and I wish that our advice had been acted on. That is the report from the county of Limerick. I now come to the Queen's county. The following is a copy of a report, received February 12, 1846 :—

**"QUEEN'S COUNTY, STRADBALLY, Feb. 11, 1846.**

"With reference to the potato disease, I beg to state that I was requested by Sir Edward Walsh and Sir A. Weldon, two magistrates of this district, to make a more searching inquiry into the state of the potatoes in the neighbourhood of the collieries than had hitherto been made. The instructions were, to make the examination by properties, and ruled forms were supplied by Sir A. Weldon, with such headings as he considered applicable to the case.

"On Monday morning, the 9th, I proceeded to Wolfhill, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Emerson, the clergyman of the parish, and commenced with the property of Mr. Hovenden. Mr. Hovenden himself being with us, we examined every house on the property, took down the number of each family, the quantity of potatoes planted, and the quantity (from actual inspection) now remaining on hands, with the quantity of oats or other grain now in the possession of the family. On Tuesday,

we went over the property of Sir Charles Coote, adjoining Mr. Hovenden's, and also over Mr. Carter's, and, so far as time would admit, examined a few families on the property of Mrs. Kavanagh, of Gracefield. Our inquiries extended to about 190 families altogether, and enable me with the most perfect accuracy to state the frightful extent to which the destruction of the potato crop has proceeded in that part of the country. Many families whom we visited, and who had planted sufficient for their ordinary wants, including the seed necessary for the ensuing season, have not had a potato of any kind for the last month. [Observe, this is in the month of February, five months at least before there can be any supply from the natural bounty of Providence.] Others have lost nearly all; and the few that still remain are totally unfit for human food. In every instance where we saw potatoes in pits in the fields we had them examined, and, with scarcely an exception, we found them to be a mass of putrefaction, perfectly disgusting, even to look at. We examined a few houses on the property of Sir Thomas Esmonde, where the land is of much better quality, but the result was in every case the same. There are literally no potatoes remaining in that part of the country.

"I understand the magistrates intend to meet on an early day, and make some representation, through the lieutenant of the county, on the above subject.

"W. W. HEMS WORTH, *Sub-inspector, 1st Rate.*"

I pass on to Waterford. There are letters received within the last two days; one from the Lord-lieutenant of that county—Lord Stuart de Decies. It is dated the 10th of February; I entreat the attention of the House to it. Lord Stuart de Decies is a person whose opinions must carry with them great authority. He says—"His excellency will find in these statements an announcement of the alarming fact, that in two districts alone of the union in question there are even at this early period of the year, no less than 300 persons whose stores of provisions are upon the point of becoming exhausted. In the meanwhile the rot is represented as making daily progress amongst the potatoes, which until lately it was hoped might have been preserved in a state of partial soundness for some time longer; and there is every reason, therefore, to anticipate that the distress now prevailing in certain localities will very speedily cause its pressure to be felt by the labouring classes throughout the union. With this prospect in view, the probability is, that a rise in the price of all kinds of grain may be expected to take place in the course of the ensuing spring and summer months, although foreign supplies were to be admitted immediately, duty free, and thus the facilities of providing food for the people in exchange for their labour be removed beyond the means which landed proprietors have at the present moment within their reach for this purpose. It is in these circumstances that I would venture respectfully to submit, as far as the interests of the county of Waterford are involved, that much good might be effected in keeping down prices by the establishment of government corn stores, from which grain might be purchased at first cost price in such towns as Youghal, Dungarvan, Waterford, Carrick, Clonmel, and perhaps Lismore. In all but the last mentioned of these towns there is an adequate military force for the protection of such granaries, if established, and no part of the county would then be beyond twelve or fourteen miles distance from a depot, whence food on moderate terms might be drawn to those localities which stood in need of a supply."

The next I read is from Kerry, dated the 9th of February, from a gentleman whose statements I believe are entitled to the highest respect—Mr. Thomas Dillon:—"I regret to have to report, for the information of government, that serious ravages have been made latterly on the potatoes by the disease which, for the last two months, was supposed at least not to be progressive. Having gone round my district within the last ten days, I have had opportunities not only of hearing, but of witnessing the destruction which has been committed, and which is gaining ground rapidly, contrary to the hopes which have been for some time cherished, as to excite the utmost alarm among all classes; and for my own part I feel almost confounded at the difficulty that must exist in procuring a sufficiency of good seed for the ensuing crop."

Such is the report of Mr. Dillon, of Cahirciveen, resident magistrate. The House is aware that there has been sitting for some time past in Dublin a commission, one of whose duties it has been to collect accurate information with respect to the

extent of the deficiency in different localities. That commission has lately made a report, which refers, I fear, to a period antecedent to that in which this disease has reappeared. I have here an official statement, from the highest authority, embracing almost every part of Ireland, every electoral district, with the exception of ninety-nine, having sent returns; and these are the facts reported by the commissioners:—"That in four electoral divisions the loss of potatoes has been nearly nine-tenths of the whole crop: in 93, between seven-tenths and eight-tenths; in 125, the loss approaches to seven-tenths of the whole crop; in 16, it approaches to six-tenths; in 596 nearly one-half of the crop is entirely destroyed; and in 582 divisions nearly four-tenths of the crop are entirely destroyed."

Here are requisitions made to us, and we are acting upon them, to establish stores of corn for the people, to be retailed at cost prices, or given in remuneration for labour. [An hon. member: It will be wanted for seed.] Yes; to get potatoes from foreign countries for the ensuing year is next to impossible. An eighth of the whole crop is required for seed; each acre of potatoes requires nearly a ton, three-fourths of a ton, at least, for seed; take the tonnage which it would require to bring in 10,000 tons of potatoes from any part of Europe where potatoes may still abound; it is impossible to supply the deficiency by foreign import. You must look for seed from the domestic supply—by making savings from the existing crop. And here is the danger, that when the pressure of famine is severe, the immediate craving of hunger will be supplied—the necessities of next year will be forgotten; the government must interfere for the purpose of encouraging the saving of potatoes in sufficient quantities, in order to secure a supply of seed for next year. How are we to do this? By the substitution, I suppose, of some other articles of provision, to be given under wise regulations, for the purpose of preventing abuse. Suppose, now, that in April or May next, we shall be under the necessity of proposing votes of public money to cover past or future expenditure—will there be a cheerful acquiescence in those votes, if the Corn-law is to remain unaltered? We are now encouraging the resident proprietors, the clergy of the Established Church, and the clergy of the Roman Catholic persuasion, to make great exertions; we are telling them, "Individual charity in your localities must supply more than the government can supply; you must give corn in exchange for seed potatoes, or for the sustenance of human life." Is it quite reasonable to make these demands on the private charity of those whose straitened means leave little disposable for charity, and at the same time to levy 17s. duty on the quarter of foreign wheat? Is the state to show no charity? For what is the duty to be levied? For revenue? But we may have to spend public money in the purchase of corn—we may have to raise its price to the consumer by our unusual intervention. Surely it is a more becoming course to remit duty than to buy heavily taxed corn! Shall we levy the 17s. for protection to domestic corn? What—when in 600 electoral divisions in Ireland only half the crop of potatoes has been saved, and in 600 more only three-fifths, while in some, nearly eight-tenths are gone? Do you believe that it would be for the credit and honour of the landed aristocracy of this country to say, "We throw upon the government the responsibility of averting the evils of famine, but not one letter of the existing Corn-law shall be altered?" Would it be fidelity to the landed interest were I to counsel this? No; I believe that, whatever might have been the outward show of consistency, such a proposal would be the real "treachery" which you impute to me, because I have thought it for your interest, and the interests of all, to relieve ourselves from the odium of stipulating for these restrictions on food in such a moment of pressure. What would have been said? Why, the pressure in Holland and in Belgium is not half so severe as it will be in Ireland; and see what the government in those two countries did at an early period of the autumn. In Belgium, the executive government took upon itself the responsibility of opening the ports to every description of provisions. The government of Holland exercised the power which it had to do this by ordinance. Belgium is an agricultural country; the chambers (the lords and commons of a neighbouring state) assembled; the government asked for indemnity, and for the continuance of open ports. Without a moment's hesitation, by acclamation as it were, without one dissentient voice, the representatives of the landed interest in Belgium gave the government indemnity, and continued the permission freely to import every article of food. What, under similar circumstances, has been



the course taken by the parliament of this country? What has been the course taken by parliaments as deeply interested as we can be in the welfare of agriculture? There have been times before the present when there has been the apprehension of scarcity in this country; what has been the remedy? What has been the remedy that the heart of every man suggested? What has been the remedy that legislative wisdom took? Why, in every case, without exception, the removal for a time of the duties upon foreign corn. [Cheers.] [An hon. member: What was done at the end of the time?] I will come to that immediately. I rejoice in the cheer which I received from that quarter [looking to the protection benches]; what is it but an assent—apparently a unanimous assent—[“No!”] at any rate, a very general assent—that at a period of impending famine, the proper precaution to be taken is to encourage the free importation of food? I have a right to infer, that if that had been the proposal, namely, that existing duties upon corn and other articles of provision should be suspended for a time, that proposal would have met with general assent. Then, if that be so, I ask you to expedite the passing of this bill: either do that, or move as an amendment that the duties upon all articles of provision shall forthwith be suspended.

I will not omit the other consideration—the course to be taken after you have suspended the law; I am trying now to convince you that I should have been unfaithful and treacherous to the landed interest, and to the party that protect the landed interest, if I had concealed the real pressure of this Irish case, and had called forth party cheers by talking about “hoisting the flag of protection”—or “rousing the British lion”—or “adhering to the true blue colour”—or steadfast maintenance of the Corn-laws “in all their integrity.” I am trying to convince you, by fair reasoning, that that is a course which would not have been consistent either with the public interest, or with the credit of the landed aristocracy. That is all I am asking you now to admit. If you answer me, “We will readily consent to suspend this law until next harvest,” I am rejoiced to have that admission from three-fourths of those by whom I shall be opposed, that it would not be wise to stipulate that for the present no alteration should be made in the Corn-law, that no maize should be admitted, that no rice should be admitted, that no oats should be admitted, at a reduced rate of duty, and that the duty upon wheat should be maintained at 17s.; I am rejoiced that I have established, to the satisfaction of the great majority, that that would not have been a prudent or a defensible course. I say it would not, because at all periods of our history the natural precautions that has been taken has been the admission, free of duty, of foreign corn in times of scarcity. I must quote some of those instances. In 1756, there was the apprehension of famine; parliament was assembled: the first step taken was to prohibit, unwisely, in my opinion, the exportation of corn; the second was to permit importation duty free. In 1767, you were again threatened with scarcity; the first act of the parliament was, to admit provisions duty free. In 1791, parliament altered the Corn-laws—they established a new Corn-law. In 1793, there was the apprehension of scarcity; notwithstanding the new Corn-law, one of the very first acts upon the statute book of 1793 is to remove, for a time, all duties upon the importation of foreign corn. In 1795, there was an apprehension, not of famine, but of scarcity, severely pressing upon some classes of the community; and in that year, and again in 1796, the same remedy was adopted—the removal of all duty upon foreign corn. In 1799, the same course was pursued, and free importation allowed. Why then, I ask, with all these precedents—when the danger, in the case of some at least, was less than it is at present—would it have been wise for a government to counsel that we should pursue a different course, refuse facilities for importation, and determine upon maintaining the existing law? Sir, I believe that course would have involved the government and the parliament in the greatest discredit; and so far from assisting us in maintaining the existing law, my firm belief is, that that law would have been encumbered with a degree of odium which would have made the defence of it impossible. It was upon these grounds that I acted. Seeing what had been done in neighbouring countries, and what had been uniformly done by your own parliament, not when corn was at 100s. or 80s., but in periods when it was under 60s.—seeing that the acknowledged remedy for scarcity was opening the ports for the admission of foreign corn, I advised the suspension of the Corn-laws. Do not answer me by saying, “There was at the period to which you refer a different Corn-law—there was no sliding-scale—there was no admission of foreign corn at a low duty when the price

was high." It was exactly the reverse of this; during the whole of that period, when corn was above 54s. in price, it was admitted at a duty of 6d.; the law made provision for the free importation of corn with even moderate prices. And why did parliament interfere? It was in order that the high duty should not attach on a reduction of price. When corn was below 54s., there was a duty of from 2s. 6d. to 24s. 8d.; when it was above 54s. the duty was 6d.; by the natural operation of the law, therefore, corn were admitted when prices were high; but there was a fear that, from a sudden importation from neighbouring ports, corn might fall below 54s., and the high duty might attach. To prevent that, and to give a guarantee to the foreign importer that he should be certain for a period of six months to have his corn admitted at a duty of 6d., parliament interposed, and gave him that guarantee. If, then, we had refused to interfere, what a contrast might have been drawn between us and those parliaments! Would refusal have been, or would it now be, for the credit either of parliament or of government? I think not. We advised, therefore—at least I advised, and three of my colleagues concurred with me—the immediate suspension of the law. The question is, what shall we do now? The law is not suspended—parliament is sitting. It would be disrespectful towards parliament for the executive to take any step; it is impossible for the executive, by an order of council, to do that which might have been done by an extreme exercise of authority, when parliament was not sitting; it would not be constitutional to do it? It may be true that the best time has passed away; that the first of November was a better period for doing this than the present. Yes, but admitting that, the necessity for acting with decision on the 16th February is only increased. True, the supplies of foreign corn might have been more ample, had the ports been opened on the 1st November; but you have six months yet before you—and what course do you suggest? If any one dissents from that course which we propose, let him propose another. You must make your choice. You must either maintain the existing law, or make some proposal for increasing the facilities of procuring foreign articles of food.

And now I come to that second consideration from which I said I would not shrink. After the suspension of the existing law, and the admission of foreign importation for a period of several months, how do you propose to deal with the existing Corn-laws? That is the question which a minister was bound to consider who advised the suspension of the Corn-laws. Now, my conviction is so strong that it would be utterly impossible, after establishing perfect freedom of trade in corn for a period of seven or eight months, to give a guarantee that the existing Corn-law should come into operation at the end of that period, that I could not encourage the delusive hope of such a result. I know it may be said, that after a temporary suspension of the law, the law itself would revive by its own operation, that there would be no necessity for any special enactment to restore its vigour. But I think it is an utter misapprehension of the state of public opinion to suppose it possible that after this country, for eight months, should have tasted of freedom in the trade in corn, you could revive, either by the tacit operation of the law itself, or by new and special enactment, the existing Corn-law. Surely, the fact of suspension, would be a condemnation of the law. It would demonstrate that the law, which professed by the total reduction of duty on corn when it had reached a certain price to provide security against scarcity, had failed in one of its essential parts. Yet you insist on the revival of this law. Now let me ask, would you revive the existing Corn-law in all its provisions? Would you refuse the admission of maize at lower duties?—at present the duty on maize is almost prohibitory. Do not suppose that those who advised suspension overlooked the consideration of the consequences of suspension—of the bearing it would have upon the state of the Corn-laws, and the question of future protection. At the expiration of suspension will you revive the existing law, or will you propose a new and modified Corn-law? If the existing law, every manifest defect must be preserved. By that law, the duty on maize varies inversely, not with the price of maize, but with the price of barley. We want maize—the price of barley is falling, but we can get no maize, because there is a prohibitory duty on maize in consequence of the low price of barley. Oh, say some, we will have a little alteration of the law, we will provide for the case of maize. Now, do not disregard public feeling in matters of this kind. It is not right that mere feeling should overbear the deliberate conviction of reason; but depend upon it, that when ques-

tions of food are concerned, public feeling cannot safely be disregarded. In the course of last session notice was given that maize should be imported duty free, because it was for the interest of the farmer to have maize for food for cattle. Do you think it possible to devise a new Corn-law, the leading principle of which should be that maize should come in duty free, because the admission of that article would enable the farmer to feed his cattle and pigs with it, but that there are certain other articles used for consumption by human beings—and in respect to them the law shall be maintained in all its force? Do you advise me to commit you to fight that battle? I am assuming now that the necessity for the suspension of the law has been established: that suspension having taken place, would you deliberately advise the government, for the sake of the public interests, or for the sake of party interests, to give a pledge either that the existing Corn-law, at the expiration of that suspension should be revived unaltered—or that there should be some trumpery modification of it, for the special benefit of the feeders of pigs and cattle? Are you insensible to the real state of public opinion on this question? Are you insensible to the altered convictions of many of your own party? Could I safely rely upon your cordial and unanimous support, as a party, for the redemption of that pledge? Look to the change of opinion, not among politicians, which you are apt to attribute to some interested or corrupt motives; but look to the opinions that have been expressed—to the sincerity of which conclusive proofs have been given by some of the most honourable men that ever sat upon these benches. Did my noble friend Lord Ashley vacate his seat for the county of Dorset from any interested or corrupt motive? Did Mr. Sturt, or Mr. W. Patten, avow their change of opinion from any interested or corrupt motives? Did Mr. Tatton Egerton offer to vacate his seat for Cheshire, or Lord Henniker his seat for Suffolk, from any other than a real change of opinion—from a conviction that the time was come for the adjustment of the question of the Corn-laws? Did Mr. Dawnay vacate his seat from such motive? Did a young member of this House, Mr. Charteris, glowing with as high and honourable a spirit as ever animated the breast of an English gentleman—distinguished for great acuteness—great intelligence—great promise of future eminence—did he abandon his seat for Gloucestershire, and withdraw from this stirring conflict from any interested or corrupt motive? Surely these are proofs that that minister who should suspend the law, and give a guarantee of the revival of it when the period of suspension expired, would have enormous difficulties to contend with.

But let us observe the course of the present debate, the admissions and expressions of opinion of those who have been loudest in their condemnation of the government. The first I notice is the hon. member for Huntingdon. Well, I confess I was surprised to hear from a gentleman of the name of Baring, some of the opinions introduced by him in regard to commerce and the Corn-laws. Would that hon. gentleman follow me in the maintenance of the existing Corn-law after the suspension of it? So far from it, the hon. gentleman thinks that this is just the time for a compromise on the subject. He then would abandon me, if, after the suspension, I had undertaken a guarantee to revive the existing law. He says this is just the time for a compromise. If ever there was an unfortunate moment for a compromise, it is the present. What is the meaning of a compromise? Clearly a new Corn-law. Now, what would be the security for the permanence of that new Corn-law? [Cheers from the protection benches.] You cheer; but what says every hon. gentleman who has appeared on the part of the agriculturists? That what the agriculturist chiefly wishes for is, permanence as to the Corn-law. Would a modified Corn-law give that assurance of permanence? Is there, in truth, any choice between maintenance of the existing Corn-law and its repeal?

I am reviewing the statements of protectionists—of the enemies of the measures of the government, and I am attempting to prove out of their own mouths, that it is hopeless to undertake to re-establish the present Corn-law, after its suspension. I confine myself to the stoutest advocates for protection. There is the member for Roxburghshire: he was among the loudest in condemning the measure of the government. The member for Roxburghshire, by the way, has a curious notion of the relation between a country and its minister, and between the sovereign and the minister of that sovereign. The hon. gentleman likened me to a hired advocate in a suit at law. He said I had thrown up my brief. Perhaps the hon. gentleman is not aware that a minister takes an oath in the presence of the sovereign to this

effect, "that in all matters to be treated and debated in council, he will, faithfully, openly, and truly, declare his mind and opinion according to his heart and conscience!" I apprehend that an obligation of this kind constitutes a material difference between the relation of a minister to his sovereign and a counsel to his client. The hon. gentleman said I had been sent here to defend the old Corn-laws; that I had made a terrible breach in them in 1842; but that I was bound, at any rate, by every consideration of consistency and honour, to maintain the Corn-law of 1842. Now what reliance can I place on his support in maintaining that law? Before he closed his speech he admitted that in his own county, within the last three years, there have been such improvements in roads, such introduction of science into agriculture, such increased facilities for producing cheap corn, that in his opinion the time is come when the present Corn-laws must be altered. On hearing this, I said to the hon. gentleman, "For whom are you counsel?" meaning that if any obligation was imposed on me to maintain the Corn-law of 1842, I could not quite understand how the hon. gentleman could so readily abandon it. The hon. gentleman was indignant at being supposed to be a counsel for any particular interest. "I counsel!" said he; "that is an imputation on my honour. I am counsel for the agriculturists—I am counsel for the commercial interests—I am counsel for the whole country—I am counsel for the interests of humanity." The hon. gentleman, like Anarcharis Clouts, at the bar of the French convention, claims to be Attorney-general to the human race. Now I do not desire functions quite so comprehensive. I ask only to be counsel for all the great interests of this country, regarding them as superior to party engagements, and to have the privilege in times of great public difficulty of giving that advice which, "in my heart and conscience," I believe to be the best for the public good.

I arrive next at the member for Newcastle-under-Lyme. The hon. member informs me that hereafter, and for ever, he withdraws his confidence from me. He withdraws it upon this ground—that I have established no great principle in respect to the Corn-laws. If there ever was a man who had little reason to distrust a minister for not establishing a principle, it is the hon. gentleman himself. He has voted with the member for Wolverhampton (Mr. C. P. Villiers), and he has voted against him. He is an advocate for a fixed duty, and he has done all he could to maintain the sliding-scale. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman has shared in my misfortune, and read the pamphlets of John Colquhoun, Esquire, of Killermont. I must say that his writings, as far as I can understand them, lean to the repeal of the Corn-laws. If, then, the hon. gentleman has voted with the member for Wolverhampton, and has voted against him—if he is a determined supporter of a fixed duty, and yet ever since 1842, has done all in his power to maintain the sliding-scale; and if my construction of his pamphlets be correct, and that he has been an advocate of repeal, I wonder how I should have fared with him if I had laid down a great principle. I wonder what the hon. gentleman would have said if, after having carried suspension, I should have subsequently declared that at the end of that suspension the government would stake its existence on the revival of the existing Corn law? I venture to say there would not have been a more strenuous opponent of such a course than the hon. gentleman; there never, at least, was a gentleman so clamorous for the announcement of a principle who left himself so completely at single anchor, ready to vote for or against any proposal that might be made.

I shall refer now to the opinions of a noble lord who has not yet taken part in the present debate—the noble lord the member for Newark (Lord J. Manners). He has addressed a letter to his constituents on this subject. Would it be possible for the government to rely upon that noble lord's support, if they had taken the course I have mentioned, that of advising a renewal of the present Corn-law after its suspension? This is the noble lord's opinion on the question of the Corn-laws:—"The conclusion to which I have come is that sanctioned by the authority of the late Lord Spencer, and other practical agriculturists, and may be stated in the emphatic words of the *Agricultural Gazette*:—'Upon the best of our unbiassed judgment, we humbly express a firm belief that both the advantages and the evils—in fact, the whole effect—of the expected change which the political journalists have bruited of late in our ears, has been absurdly magnified, as much by the ignorance as by the feelings and

wishes of the combatants on both sides; and that of all the panic dreams that ever sat like a nightmare upon the energies of human enterprise, or cramped the sinews of a noble pursuit, the idea, in a densely inhabited country, where population is rapidly increasing, trade and commerce extending, industry and skill unequalled, and true science dawning, that human food is likely to become too cheap, and its production unprofitable, is the most unaccountable, and will be eventually found the most illusory and groundless."

I do not know what course the noble lord means to take with respect to the present measure. He calls fear of the repeal of the Corn-laws a panic dream, sitting like a nightmare on the energies of human enterprise; and yet he thinks the present parliament ought not to enact, nor the present minister to propose, their repeal. Well, but that personal objection is no satisfactory answer to the country why this panic dream should not be disturbed.

The hon. member for Maidstone (Mr. A. Hope) said, "I will not inquire whether the measure is right or wrong, but I will look to your conduct. I will give extracts from your speeches, and I will show that you ought not to propose a repeal of the Corn-laws." But, surely, the question which the hon. gentleman will not ask, is the very question which the country asks, namely, is the measure right or is it wrong? Is it advisable that the Corn-laws should be suspended, and that after such suspension they should revive? If it be right, vote for such a proposal; if your objection is not to the measure, but to the government that advises it, withdraw, if you please, your confidence from that government; but surely you cannot justify voting against a measure which concerns such mighty interests, and which you believe to be right.

Now, sir, I come to the member for Somersetshire (Mr. W. Miles), who made no such admissions as those which fell from the member for Roxburghshire, and the member for Huntingdon. I infer from his speech, that he is for the maintenance of the existing law in all its integrity. [Mr. W. Miles: Hear, hear.] That hon. gentleman gave me notice, that from henceforth I must not expect to possess his confidence. Of course I heard that statement with regret, though without surprise. The hon. gentleman must excuse me for observing that, in closing his connection with me, he has underrated his own importance. He has not always been a follower of mine. On more than one occasion he has been himself a leader. On the great question of "protection to native grease," he set up for himself, and was my determined opponent. I will rob him of none of his laurels—not one. I proposed, last year, that the then existing duty on foreign grease, an article extensively used in manufactures, should be remitted, and the hon. gentleman rose and said, emphatically, "There must be a stop to these attacks on native produce. I take my stand on grease—

'Hence! avault! 'tis holy ground.'

"Grease," said the hon. gentleman, "you shall not touch," And why? "Because," said he, "although the admission of grease might be beneficial to the manufacturers, I doubt the vigilance of the Custom-house officers, and I think some people would eat the grease intended for manufacturers, and diminish the demand for butter." Now, I must say the hon. gentleman, in taking his stand upon grease, did more injury to the cause of protection than has been done by any decided enemy to that cause.

Mr. W. Miles was understood to say that he had merely stopped the discussion at a late hour in order to obtain its adjournment, and was absent the next day.

Sir R. Peel: Then I admit at once to the hon. gentleman, that on that occasion he exhibited his qualifications for a leader, by his discretion in absenting himself from the discussion on grease.

The hon. gentleman must permit me to advert, with perfect good humour, to two or three of his arguments. I listened to his speech with great attention; but I feared that he was handling edge tools. I had previously stated that the price of cattle and meat had not been diminished by the tariff; that the navy contracts for the present year had been entered into on higher terms than those of preceding years. The hon. gentleman said, I had omitted to state the real cause of this increase—that I had overlooked the fact that, during the last six months, the number of sheep brought into Smithfield market had decreased by 250,000, as compared with a

former period of six months; that there had been an average weekly falling-off in the London market of 16,000 sheep; that the cattle had decreased in weight from ten to seven stone, and, therefore, meat was higher in price. Be it so. Now, does the hon. gentleman, after making such a statement, really exult in having opposed the tariff of 1842? Does he think it a public misfortune that when our own cattle have been half-starved for want of green food—when the supply of sheep in Smithfield market has fallen off, according to his own showing, to the extent of 250,000 in one half-year—when there is a deficiency of 16,000 in the weekly supply of sheep—when “the kine are lean-fleshed and ill-flavoured,” does he think it a public misfortune that we have imported in twelve months a few healthy cattle, and some sheep, from the continent, to the extent of a week’s deficiency?

Mr. W. Miles said, he had suggested that the duty on cattle should be regulated by weight, and not by numbers.

Sir R. Peel continued: I now refer to the hon. member’s remarks relative to the article of flax. When a duty of £10 a ton was imposed upon foreign flax, it seems that certain parishes in the county of Somerset grew flax. In the parish of Chisselburgh 100 acres were devoted to the culture of that article, but now grow flax no longer. Now, I should wish to know what were the circumstances under which that cultivation was abandoned? Was it in consequence of the withdrawal of the duty; and at what period did Chisselburgh abandon the cultivation of flax?

Mr. W. Miles: After the last removal of the duty on flax?

Sir R. Peel: The last removal! why the last removal of duty was in 1842. And what was the amount of that duty? It was one penny on the hundred weight of foreign flax. Surely, that was no protection to the domestic produce of Chisselburgh and Aldcock, and the two Cockers. If these parishes have very recently ceased to cultivate flax, it has been for some better reason than the removal of the duty on foreign flax. That removal took place, not in 1842, but in 1824. Previously to 1824, there was a duty on foreign flax of £10 per ton; and it was then reduced to a nominal duty—recently repealed altogether. “See,” says the hon. gentleman, “what injury free-trade has inflicted on Chisselburgh! £1,000 have been annually withdrawn from the encouragement of native industry in one parish alone!” It is pretty clear that free-trade has had nothing to do with the matter. But if it had, are there no interests in the world but those of the parish of Chisselburgh, and the two Cockers? Would the loss of £1,000 in Chisselburgh be decisive against the free admission of foreign flax? Let us see what has taken place in other important parts of the empire, since the withdrawal of the protection to native industry. You will find that in Ireland no culture is at this moment more profitable than that of flax; you will find that this trade has become flourishing since the last remnant of protection was withdrawn. It appears from the report of Lord Devon’s commission, that the culture of flax in Ireland is more profitable than that of wheat; that flax, without protection, gives a better return than wheat with it. And what has been the effect upon the manufacture of linen? What was the state of the linen manufacture in Ireland before the removal of protection? I will assume, for the calculation, that a fixed amount of French cambrics and cambric handkerchiefs—say 1,000 dozens—has been imported into London annually. Before the removal of the duty, the manufacture of Irish, as compared with French cambrics, was as 100 to 1000 dozens. In the next four years, from 1830 to 1834, the Irish manufacture was in the proportion of 300 to 1000 dozens; from 1834 to 1838, as 900 to 1000; from 1838 to 1842, as 4000 to 1000; and from 1844 to 1846, as 16,000 to 1000. Since the withdrawal of protection, a great manufacture has arisen in the north of Ireland. I was assured the other day, by dealers in linen of the highest respectability, that whereas ten years ago, three-fourths of the cambrics and cambric handkerchiefs came from France, and one-fourth only from Ireland; in the last year the proportion was just reversed, one-fourth coming from France, and three-fourths from Ireland. So that it may be true that Chisselburgh has suffered; but coincident with that suffering, the culture of flax in Ireland, and the linen manufacture of Ireland, have prospered to an extent exceeding the expectations of the most sanguine friend to Ireland. Well now, in order to restore prosperity to the parish of Chisselburgh, will you replace the £10 duty on foreign flax? And will you do this under the pretence of protecting native industry?

This debate, Sir, has chiefly turned on the Corn-laws—but it is not necessarily a Corn-law debate. I propose a committee of the whole House to consider the principles of our commercial policy. No doubt the question of the Corn-laws will come before that committee; but it is quite open to you to reject my proposal on the subject of the Corn-laws, and to agree to all or some of the others. So much, however, has been said on the subject of the Corn-laws in the course of this debate, that I cannot avoid adverting to it. Sir, her Majesty's ministers have proposed this measure in the belief that it is the one most likely to ensure success. They have proposed that, at the end of three years, the duties on corn shall be repealed, or at least reduced to a nominal amount. I proposed that measure, on the part of her Majesty's government, in the sincere belief that it was likely to be more acceptable than immediate repeal to the agricultural interest. I proposed it in the belief that not merely would it be more acceptable to them, but that it would be more advantageous than immediate repeal. We accompanied our proposal with respect to the Corn-laws, with another for encouraging the improvement of land, by advancing public money for the purpose of drainage. I certainly thought that, as to many lands in this country, we should be in a better position to compete with the foreigner, if absolute repeal of the Corn-laws were postponed to the end of three years; that there would be a better opportunity for making arrangements, if necessary, between landlord and tenant; that, considering that Canada has now an advantage as to the admission of her corn, compared with the corn of foreigners, it would be more acceptable to Canada, and more for the interest of that colony, that some time should elapse before Canada corn came into direct competition with that of the United States. It was on this account, believing that the arrangement we proposed was more likely to prevent panic, and on the whole better for the agriculturists, that on the part of the government I made the proposal. Believing it to be the best, it is my intention to adhere to it—that is to say, I shall propose it, and use all the legitimate means I can to give effect to it. But, Sir, it was intimated the other night by the member for Somersetshire, speaking on the part of the agriculturist, that he would greatly prefer immediate repeal to the proposal of the government; and that sentiment of his, as he turned round to his friends behind him, received apparently a very general concurrence. Now, as I stated before, it is the intention of her Majesty's government to adhere to their proposal. But at the same time I feel it to be my duty distinctly to give notice that if the agricultural body are of opinion that it will be for their advantage that there should be immediate instead of deferred repeal—if, by an union with hon. gentlemen opposite, they should place me in a minority, then the only consideration which I shall bear in mind will be this—what course can I take best calculated to give effect to the law so amended at your instance? I will do all I can to carry the proposition of the government. I prefer it—I proposed it believing it to be favourable to the agricultural interest. I do not say what course, speaking for myself, individually, I may pursue. I don't say what effect the substitution of immediate for postponed repeal here might have in another place, for which I have less means of answering than I have had heretofore; but this I will say, that my own opinion as to the policy of a final adjustment of the Corn-laws will remain unaltered; and that I shall decidedly prefer immediate repeal, even though carried against my own proposal, to throwing the country into confusion by the rejection of this measure. Observe, it will be quite open for me to consider what course of personal conduct will be most conducive to the result I should have in view; but the final adjustment of this question will be with me a consideration paramount to all others.

In the course of this debate, I have been asked more than once to specify the price at which corn will sell after the passing of the new law. I observed that it was very difficult for me to give a positive answer to that question; that I thought the price must be effected by variation of seasons and other considerations; and I, therefore, could not offer—nor, indeed, would past experience encourage me to offer—any guarantee, or to give any positive opinion, as to the probable future price of corn. But this I must say, that nothing can be more erroneous than to suppose that the interests of agriculture are necessarily interwoven with the price of wheat. I will attempt to demonstrate this. The member for Somersetshire talked of the boundless wilds from which corn would come, and is oppressed with the fear of

enormous production. I will ask him to consider that the island of Jersey has, for many years, enjoyed free trade in corn, and to look at the result as to price in that island. Corn may be introduced into Malta from Egypt and Odessa. The price of it, delivered at Malta, has been, on an average of years, about 30s. per quarter; but that corn bears a price of 10s. less in the English markets, on account of its decided inferiority. It is impossible to draw a just inference from the nominal price at which corn may sell, without, at the same time taking into account, among other elements of price, the quality of the corn. I doubt, certainly, whether there will be any such great reduction in the price of wheat, in consequence of more extended importation, as seriously to injure the agricultural interest. But what I want to show is this—that agricultural prosperity has no necessary connection with a high price of wheat. It has been frequently admitted that there never was a time when science was so successfully applied to agriculture, when such reductions had been made in the cost of production, as in the last three or four years. Yet the price of wheat has been declining. The price of wheat seems to have a necessary tendency to decline in this country, apart altogether from all legislation. I will take decennial periods, commencing with the ten years ending in 1803. The average price of wheat for the ten years ending

|                | <i>s.</i> | <i>d.</i> |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1805 was ..... | 81        | 10½       |
| 1815 „ .....   | 97        | 6         |
| 1825 „ .....   | 78        | 8         |
| 1835 „ .....   | 56        | 7         |
| 1845 „ .....   | 57        | 11        |

Now, what has been the average of the last four years—a period during which the greatest improvements are admitted to have been made in the science of agriculture? The average of the last four years has been 51s. 10d. only. The average of fifty years, from 1791 to 1841, was 68s. 7d. The price of wheat has fallen, between 1815 and 1845, taking the average of four or five preceding years, from 97s. 6d. to 51s. 10d. And yet it is admitted that agricultural prosperity was never more marked, and that at no period were greater improvements made. And, therefore, if there should be still a continued fall in the price of wheat, I must ask you, in the first place, not to impute it, as a necessary consequence to the operation of the new law, for I have shown you that there is a natural tendency to a decline in the price of wheat; and in the second place, not to consider a diminished price of wheat indicative of the ruin of agriculture. A remarkable series of facts presents itself in comparing the rental of land with the price of wheat. The gross rental of land in 1815, as taken from the Property Tax Return, was £32,502,000. The average price of wheat for the five years ending in 1815, was 102s. 5d. For the five years ending with 1842, the price of wheat was 64s. 7d., while the gross rental of land in England had increased to £37,794,000. Thus, coincident with a fall in the price of corn, there was an increase in the rental of land. I admit that there was a change in the currency as comparing 1815 with 1842; but then you must recollect, if on that account you take 10 per cent. off the nominal price of corn, in the one case, you must take 10 per cent. off the gross rental also; so that the result, as far as the argument is concerned, is the same. If you deduct 10 per cent. from the price of the first five years, on account of depreciated currency, the price will be 92s. 2d.; but you must also deduct 10 per cent. from the gross rental of the first five years, which will reduce it to £29,250,000. Take it as you will, there has been increased rental coincident with an immense reduction in the price of wheat. No doubt the productive powers of the land have been increased—no doubt great improvements have been made—but surely this is a proof that with declining prices of wheat there has been a profitable application of capital to the improvement of the soil.

Sir, a speech was made during this debate, of great ability—I allude to that of the hon. gentleman the member for Northamptonshire (Mr. Stafford O'Brien.) However I may regret some of the expressions in that speech, or dissent from its conclusions, I cannot do otherwise than acknowledge its ability. But what was the argument of the hon. gentleman? He told us that, after this law was passed, the tenant-farmer would come to his landlord, and would address him somewhat after



this manner—"I cannot afford to pay the rent I have hitherto paid. The bones of my family have been deposited for many generations in the churchyard of this ancient parish. It is most painful to me to quit this, the residence of my ancestors, the rude forefathers of this hamlet, and to seek my fortune in another country." And the hon. gentleman (making a great impression on this House, from the pathetic tone in which his speech was delivered) proposed that the landlord should make a speech in reply. Addressing the tenant, he was to say—"My good fellow!"—[Laughter]—"My good fellow! it is true that your forefathers lived in this parish, and that there has been an intimate relation between your ancestors and mine; but the principles of free trade are prevailing now. I can purchase all the articles of my consumption at a cheaper rate in foreign markets. I must deal with you on the same principle. The land you occupy produces only three quarters of wheat per acre. With the application of capital and skill, it may be made to produce five quarters; and there is a gentleman connected with the Anti-Corn-law League"—[Mr. S. O'Brien: No, no.] Well, then, "a gentleman connected with the manufacturing districts (not the Anti-Corn-law League,) is ready to come and take your farm at an increased rent." This was the speech which the hon. gentleman put into the mouth of his landlord. Now, Sir, I can suggest another, and I think a better, speech to be made by this landlord to his desponding tenant. I would have him say, "My good fellow!"—[Laughter.] (Let us have for each speech the same advantage of the pathetic tone.) "My good fellow! our forefathers have, it is true, been buried in the churchyard of this parish. The fortunes of your family have long been connected with the fortunes of mine. This protection to agriculture has been a bad business for both of us. Under these protective laws your farm, which ought to produce five quarters of wheat per acre only produces three; and public opinion will hardly tolerate this, that there shall be at the same time restrictions on the import of foreign corn, and that our own soil shall produce two-fifths less than it ought to produce. We must take some measures, therefore, to increase the produce of your farm. I have the advantage of the new tariff, I am able to purchase my luxuries and comforts at a lower rate, and I intend to apply the whole amount of the saving to your assistance, and to the improvement of your land. I won't, therefore, turn you out of your farm; I won't let this manufacturer outbid you in the rent; but, my good fellow, it is for your interest and mine that the land should bear five quarters of wheat instead of three. You have not the capital and science which are necessary for this; I will assist you by the advance of capital, by scientific advice in improving your land; I will contribute towards the education of your son, and enable him to assist you in your old age, and to succeed you in the farm hereafter. I will cut down the trees which encumber your fields. Let you and I unite to keep out this foreign invader—this manufacturer who wants to supplant you. You have the industry, I have the capital; let us improve this farm; let it be handed down to your son and to mine in an improved state; there shall be five quarters of wheat where there are three now. That will be for the benefit of both landlord and tenant; and the bones of your sons, and the bones of mine for generations to come shall lie together in the old churchyard with those of our forefathers." Now that is the speech which I would put into the mouth of the landlord, and I think it the better speech of the two. Well, but suppose the tenant should rejoinder, "Ah, sir, this is not a landlord's—this is not a tenant's—this is a labourer's question." I should answer, "Then, my good fellow, if we make this land which now produces three quarters of wheat produce five, we shall employ more labourers. There will be a greater demand for labour. Thus all parties will be benefited—the estate will be benefited, the security for your rent will be increased—your comfort will be increased—there will be more labour employed—and all this good will be done by the liberal application of that saving which the hon. gentleman says the rich are to derive from free trade and the new tariff."

This, however, is no mere Corn-law question. Her Majesty made surely no unreasonable demand when she thus addressed you in the speech from the throne:—"I recommend you to take into your early consideration whether the principles on which you have acted may not with advantage be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in your power, after a careful review of the existing duties upon many articles, the produce or manufactures of other countries, to make such further

reductions and remissions as may tend to ensure the continuance of the great benefits to which I have adverted."

And you promised you would do this. The address was purposely worded not to give a pledge as to the adoption of particular measures; but it gave this assurance to the sovereign, that—"In compliance with her Majesty's recommendation, we will take into our early consideration whether the principles on which we have acted may not with advantage be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in our power, after a careful review of the existing duties upon many articles, the produce or manufactures of other countries, to make such further reductions and remissions as may tend to ensure the continuance of the great benefits to which her Majesty has adverted."

How do you fulfil that assurance? Will you refuse to go into committee at all? What is the amendment? Does it embody any great principle, as I expected it would, from the early notice that was given by the hon. member for Newcastle-under-Lyme? I expected he would have moved either that the government was not entitled to the confidence of parliament, or that native industry is entitled to protection; but what motion is made now? Why, that no reduction of customs' duties shall be considered for six months to come. After a positive assurance given to her Majesty that you will take these matters into consideration, you determine not only that there shall be no change, but no inquiry—no consideration. Is it possible you can refuse to go into the committee? Do you decide at once against the admission of foreign brandy, for instance? Do you decide at once against the admission of foreign silk? This amendment absolutely precludes the consideration in committee of any one of these questions. In point of fact, this is not a question of corn at all. There is a great principle at issue; the question is with respect to commercial policy. The question is, will you advance or will you recede? The immediate proposal is, indeed, to stand still—for six months to come to do nothing! With reference to the commercial policy of this great country, to stand still is to retrograde. The carrying of this amendment is a reflection on the past course of the House of Commons. Every year you have been relaxing protection; you say you will relax it no more—you will not listen to any proposals—the Speaker shall not leave the chair. Well, I do hope this House, which has been party to all the former proposals of reduction, which simplified the commercial code, which consented to the tariff of 1842, which passed the Canada Corn bill, which passed the amended tariff of 1845—I do hope this House will not pass such a reflection on itself, as to vote that the consideration of these measures be postponed for six months to come.

The question at issue is, whether you will advance in the relaxation of duties and the removal of prohibitions, or restore prohibitory duties, and increase protective duties? I never said that it was on the experience of the tariff for the last three years, that the measures of the government were founded. I said this—that during three years there have been, coincident with abundance and low prices of food, great contentment—the diminution of crime—the abatement of all social disorders, improved health—increased commerce. This is the experience of three years to which I referred—which tends to prove that cheapness and plenty are the foundation of your prosperity. I did not take the credit of this to the tariff: all I claimed for the tariff was this—that, concurrently with these great blessings, there have been constant relaxations of duties protective and prohibitory; and that if they have not caused—they have not, at any rate, obstructed our advance in the course of improvement. But I will offer this challenge, not connected with the tariff of the last three years alone, but with respect to the whole series of your relaxations of prohibitory duties; show me, in the case of any important protected interest, one relaxation, one removal of prohibition, which has not contributed to the advantage of the great body of the consumers of this country. Nay, I go further. Again, speaking of all great interests, show me any removal of prohibition, or extreme protection, which has not, at an early period, contributed to the welfare of the producer.

I have been ashamed to read some of the petitions which have been presented on this subject of protection. A petition was presented the other night from certain shipowners of the port of London. The petitioners represent that they are deeply interested in the prosperity of the shipping interest; and, in conclusion, they—"invoke the wisdom of parliament to check all further rash experiments on British

navigation, and, as an earnest of its sympathy with a branch of commerce indissolubly connected with national defence, they implore your honourable House to reject the proposition for reducing the duty on the importation of foreign timber from 25s. to 15s., as proposed by her Majesty's government."

And this from shipowners! From the builders of ships! And they conclude with a prayer to you to check all further rash experiments on British navigation! What has been the issue of the rash experiment you made in 1842? You found, then, a discriminating duty of 45s. in favour of Canada timber, which you reduced to 25s. Have you destroyed the Canada trade? Has that rash experiment been destructive of the welfare of shipowners? You reduced the duty on Canada timber to nothing; on Baltic timber you reduced the duty from 45s. to 25s. the load. What has been the result? At the port of Liverpool the average tonnage in the British North American trade for eleven years preceding the reduction of duty was 163,000 tons; since you removed the duty, since you made the rash experiments of 1842, the average tonnage has been 194,000 tons. On the average of seven years before the reduction of duty, 6,749,000 cubic feet of pine, of all sorts, were brought into home consumption; in 1844, the quantity amounted to 6,211,000 cubic feet; and in 1845, to 6,807,000 cubic feet. Yet the shipowners call on you to refuse a reduction of the duty on Baltic timber to 15s. the load, as they called on you to refuse a reduction formerly from 45s. to 25s. I presume Liverpool is interested in the prosperity of the Canada trade, and in the building of ships. Allow me to read the following extract from a Liverpool circular with reference to the supply of timber for building ships of the first class:—"There is one branch of the timber trade which has this year been very scantily supplied with those woods adapted for the construction of ships of the first class. So trifling has been the supply, that at the present moment, this, one of the greatest maritime ports in the world, is in the anomalous position of not having in stock a single log of foreign wood suitable for a twelve years' ship. There can be no question, therefore, of the policy which, by removal of duties, would encourage the supply of such woods from all parts of the world, and, at all events, admit, free of duty, all oaks, hard-woods, masts, spars, treenails, pitch, pine, and such woods as enter largely and almost exclusively into the construction of ships. As the colonial timber trade, formerly encouraged by bounty, has at length arrived at its present enlarged state, it is surely not unreasonable now that the shipwright should have all restrictions removed, so as to receive from all parts of the world, at least in the unsawn state, whatever material he employs in the construction of ships, the great source of this country's wealth and power, and absolutely necessary for her national defence. The removal of all restrictions, and an economical mode of storing, would cause this to be one of the largest dépôts in the kingdom."

Not a single log of foreign wood in the port of Liverpool suitable for a twelve years' ship! Can this be true? and if it is, what think you of a petition from shipowners and shipbuilders to reject the rash experiment of permitting a freer access to the timber required for shipbuilding? and will that free access destroy the Canada trade? On the contrary, as the import of foreign wool increased the demand for domestic wool, so will the import of Baltic timber increase the demand for that sort of Canada timber for which the former is not a substitute.

I cannot pass unnoticed the speech of my gallant friend the member for Liverpool (Sir Howard Douglas). It was a condemnation of the principles of free trade, and an argument that such principles are wholly at variance with the maintenance of our revenue, and our colonial system. My gallant friend assumes that free trade means the removal of duties levied on articles of consumption for revenue purposes. I make no such proposition, and defend no such doctrine. Nay, I do not advise, even with reference to purely commercial considerations, the sudden and violent application of principles theoretically true. I do not abolish all protective duties; on the contrary, the amended tariff maintains many duties that are purely protective, as distinguished from revenue duties. But though duties levied for revenue may operate as protection to branches of domestic industry, there is a clear distinction between the objects for which such duties, and duties purely protective, are levied; and it is a wholly erroneous assumption, that those who advise that the principles of free trade should be the ruling principles to which our commercial policy should gradually conform, either do contend, or are bound by any logical necessity to contend

that *bona fide* revenue duties on foreign products ought to be abolished. Then as to the colonial system. Any one who heard my gallant friend's speech would infer, that the measures of the government involve a total subversion of that system. If they pass, there will still be left discriminating duties considerable in amount in favour of almost all articles the produce of the colonies—sugar, coffee, timber, butter, cheese, and various articles of colonial manufacture. But this I cannot deny, that for many years past you have applied to your colonial system the same general principle you have applied to your commercial policy, foreign and domestic. Your rule has been (a wise rule, I think,) to relax cautiously and gradually the rigour of the colonial system. All the measures of Mr. Huskisson had that tendency. The relaxation was not a one-sided one, favouring the mother country at the expense of the colonies. You have reduced the discriminating duties on coffee, to a limited extent on sugar, and on other articles of colonial produce; but you have consented, at the same time, to forego the protection which the produce of the mother country had in the colonial market. You have permitted the colonies to supply themselves from the United States with articles of the first necessity; you have reduced the protecting duties in favour of British, as compared with articles of foreign manufacture, from 30 to 20, to 15, to  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The ruling spirit which has prevailed for a long series of years in your colonial legislation has been the relaxation of protection—the reciprocal relaxation of it as regards British and colonial produce. And has either party been injured by it? It is a mistake to suppose that our colonial system, and the attachment of the colonies to the mother country, are based upon a system of exclusion and prohibition. Some of your colonies—the Australian colonies, for instance—derive little benefit from the colonial system, if that system implies exclusive favour to colonial produce. But, surely, speaking generally, your colonial relations are perfectly compatible with the just and cautious application of a liberal policy in the commercial intercourse between the mother country and its dependencies.

Now, as to the protection of native industry. The advocates of the Corn-law seek to enlist in the defence of that law all branches of manufactures threatened with the loss or diminution of protection. The warmest sympathy is expressed with the working classes employed in manufactures, which are to be ruined by foreign competition.

The hon. gentleman, the member for Nottingham, was particularly severe upon the removal of protective duties on paper hangings. I really don't know why there should be such a complaint. There is an excise duty of  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per square yard on papers fabricated in this country; and I propose that there shall be a duty on foreign paper about 700 per cent. above the domestic duty. I propose, that while British pays  $\frac{1}{4}$ d., foreign should pay 2d. per yard. I know it is said our patterns are inferior to the foreign. But, depend upon it, there is nothing in the physical constitution of Englishmen to prevent them from drawing as good patterns as Frenchmen, if you will stimulate them to exertion by competition. The hon. gentleman described himself as looking out of his window, and mourning over the sight of a vast number of paper-makers, carriage-makers, and others, all crying out that they are ruined by free trade. Why, there has not been a single alteration made in prohibitory or protective duties where the same prophecy has not been made. It was the constant warning when the tariff was altered in 1842. We proposed to admit foreign potatoes at a moderate rate of duty. The potato growers of Yorkshire said, "We shall be ruined." In 1842, there was a reduction of the duty on hops from £8, 11s. to £4, 10s. The hop growers of Kent and Sussex said, "We shall be ruined: where are those employed in the culture of hops to find subsistence?" What quantity of foreign hops have come in at the reduced duty? Two hundred weight. I have now proposed that there shall be a reduction of the duty to £2, 5s. A deputation of hop growers were with me the other day, and said they would be ruined. I referred to the prophecy they had made in 1842, and showed them that the whole quantity introduced was no more than those two hundred weight. When Mr. Huskisson proposed an alteration of the silk duties, about twenty years since, how gloomy were the forebodings of ruin! That great authority, Mr. Baring (Lord Ashburton) resisted the reduction of protection, and said—"There were hundreds of thousands of poor honest men who knew nothing in the world of political economy, but who, because some very wise men had sprung up of late, were to be robbed of the

earnings of their patient labours. There was to be only a duty of 30 per cent. protection against foreign competition. Would the House consent to a measure which must have the effect of driving all the workmen connected with it to the poor rates for subsistence? When the French manufacturer maintained—as he (Mr. Baring) contended he would—his superiority, what would become of his (Mr. Huskisson's) principles then? How was he to reconcile himself to the operation of a system which would drive to utter ruin and starvation the hundreds of thousands engaged in the silk trade throughout the United Kingdom?"

One gentleman improved upon Mr. Baring's denunciation, and said, "as for unbending, hard-hearted metaphysicians"—(his language reminds me of some attacks which have been made of late upon another minister)—"they exceeded the devil himself in point of malignity and contempt for the happiness of mankind." Mr. Huskisson replied in these memorable and affecting terms:—"I have been assailed and distressed by ungenerous appeals to my feelings, calling upon me to commune with my conscience and my God, and to say whether I am under no visitations of compunction and remorse. Good God! that man must have a heart of stone who can witness without sympathy and pain the distress which now exists among our manufacturers. I hope I am not wanting in the duties and feelings of a man. I have also a duty to perform as a minister—to trace the causes of the present calamities, and to prevent, if possible, their recurrence."

He therefore persevered: he removed the duty; and what has been the result? Were hundreds of thousands of silk manufacturers thrown out of employment? Have the poor rates been burdened for their subsistence? Have we been unable to compete with foreigners? In the decennial period ending in 1823, the quantity of raw and thrown silk entered for home consumption was . . . 19,409,023 lbs.

For the ten years ending 1833, immediately after the reduction of

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| the duty . . . . .                      | 39,681,248 .. |
| For the ten years ending 1843 . . . . . | 52,007,118 .. |

*The aggregate annual consumption of the successive decennial periods was,*

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| For the ten years ending 1823 . . . . . | 1,940,000 lbs. |
| For the ten years ending 1833 . . . . . | 3,968,124 ..   |
| For the ten years ending 1843 . . . . . | 5,200,711 ..   |

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| A further reduction of duty took place in 1842. The consumption  |              |
| which for the ten years ending in 1823 was on the annual average | 1,940,902 .. |
| For the single year 1844 . . . . .                               | 6,208,021 .. |

Who was the true philanthropist? Was it the man who cried out against the admission of French silks, and denounced the minister as being equal to the devil himself in point of malignity and contempt for the happiness of mankind? Or, was it that minister who said, "Good God! don't suppose I do not sympathise with distress. Don't load me with the reproach of causing ruin to thousands when I am endeavouring to benefit them? I have seen Spitalfields under the system of protection at the point of starvation. I have seen constantly recurring periods of severe distress; let me trace the causes of such calamities, and try whether by bringing in the free air of competition, I cannot diminish or remove the sources of such calamities." And have you been unable to compete with France? Why, you have sent silk manufactures, goods and yarn, into that very country which has Lyons at the head of the silk trade; you sent as great an amount of silk manufactures into France last year, as you exported to all Europe in the year 1826. I could go through the details of other articles. I could go through timber, through wool, through flax, through inferior articles; but let me take only one, the article of foreign feathers. It seems a small article, but trade consists of an aggregate of small articles. In the year 1842, we reduced the duty on foreign feathers; at that time a manufacturer of those articles in which feathers are used, said that this was the most hard-hearted measure that was ever introduced; that he had a house in England, and another in Ireland—that he dealt with English farmers for feathers, and found them careless with respect to them—that the Irish were more provident, though not very humane, as they plucked the birds alive. But he said he took almost all his feathers from Ireland, and he brought thence every year 100 tons of feathers, and that he paid for them 20s. a stone. There would be an end of the feather trade, he said,

with the Irish and English farmer if this measure should be passed. Well, it did pass, and this year the same person, admits his error in having opposed the reduction of duty on foreign feathers. I have very recently received this statement, founded, I believe, on his own assurances:—"He has imported in one year, '1845,' from St. Petersburg, above 250 tons of feathers, and over 50 tons more from other places, Dantzic, Riga, Memel, and the Mediterranean; and, strange to say, so great has the demand become for feather beds, since they became cheap, that he purchased 150 tons also, in 1845, in Ireland, the growth of Ireland; and he is paying now 22s. 10d. per stone, showing an increased growth of 50 tons, and of price for the same article, while the great demand has enabled him to extend his concern, and lessen his charges. He added, that when provisions were cheap in Cornwall, the miners purchased a great deal of feathers."

This is a small matter, but it reads us an important lesson. The cheapness of the article has multiplied the demand for it; with increased foreign import, there has been an increased demand for the domestic produce. The Cornish miners, earning high wages and buying at a low price the articles of food, apply their savings to the purchase of manufactured articles, and of that particular article which enables them to recruit by night the severe toil of the day.

This night is to decide between the policy of continued relaxation of restriction, or the return to restraint and prohibition. This night you will select the motto which is to indicate the commercial policy of England. Shall it be "advance" or "recede?" Which is the fitter motto for this great empire? Survey our position; consider the advantage which God and nature have given us, and the destiny for which we are intended. We stand on the confines of Western Europe, the chief connecting link between the old world and the new. The discoveries of science, the improvement of navigation, have brought us within ten days of St. Petersburg, and will soon bring us within ten days of New York. We have an extent of coast greater in proportion to our population and the area of our land, than any other great nation, securing to us maritime strength and superiority. Iron and coal, the sinews of manufacture, give us advantages over every rival in the great competition of industry. Our capital far exceeds that which they can command. In ingenuity—in skill—in energy—we are inferior to none. Our national character, the free institutions under which we live, the liberty of thought and action, an unshackled press, spreading the knowledge of every discovery and of every advance in science—combine with our natural and physical advantages to place us at the head of those nations which profit by the free interchange of their products. And is this the country to shrink from competition? Is this the country to adopt a retrograde policy? Is this the country which can only flourish in the sickly, artificial atmosphere of prohibition? Is this the country to stand shivering on the brink of exposure to the healthful breezes of competition?

Choose your motto. "Advance" or "Recede." Many countries are watching with anxiety the selection you may make. Determine for "Advance," and it will be the watchword which will animate and encourage in every state the friends of liberal and commercial policy. Sardinia has taken the lead. Naples is relaxing her protective duties, and favouring British produce. Prussia is shaken in her adherence to restriction. The government of France will be strengthened; and, backed by the intelligence of the reflecting, and by conviction of the real welfare of the great body of the community, will perhaps ultimately prevail over the self-interest of the commercial and manufacturing aristocracy which now predominates in her chambers. Can you doubt that the United States will soon relax her hostile tariff, and that the friends of a freer commercial intercourse—the friends of peace between the two countries—will hail with satisfaction the example of England?

This night, then—if on this night the debate shall close—you will have to decide what are the principles by which your commercial policy is to be regulated. Most earnestly, from a deep conviction, founded not upon the limited experience of three years alone, but upon the experience of the results of every relaxation of restriction and prohibition, I counsel you to set the example of liberality to other countries. Act thus, and it will be in perfect consistency with the course you have hitherto taken. Act thus, and you will provide an additional guarantee for the continued

contentment, and happiness, and well-being of the great body of the people. Act thus, and you will have done whatever human sagacity can do for the promotion of commercial prosperity.

You may fail. Your precautions may be unavailing. They may give no certain assurance that mercantile and manufacturing prosperity will continue without interruption. It seems to be incident to great prosperity that there shall be a reverse—that the time of depression shall follow the season of excitement and success. That time of depression must perhaps return; and its return may be coincident with scarcity caused by unfavourable seasons. Gloomy winters, like those of 1841 and 1842, may again set in. Are those winters effaced from your memory? From mine they never can be. Surely you cannot have forgotten with what earnestness and sincerity you re-echoed the deep feelings of a gracious Queen, when at the opening and at the close of each session, she expressed the warmest sympathy with the sufferings of her people, and the warmest admiration of their heroic fortitude.

These sad times may recur. "The years of plenteousness may have ended," and "the years of dearth may have come;" and again you may have to offer the unavailing expressions of sympathy, and the urgent exhortations to patient resignation.

Commune with your own hearts and answer me this question: will your assurances of sympathy be less consolatory—will your exhortations to patience be less impressive—if, with your willing consent the Corn-laws shall have then ceased to exist? Will it be no satisfaction to you to reflect, that by your own act, you have been relieved from the grievous responsibility of regulating the supply of food? Will you not then cherish with delight the reflection that, in this the present hour of comparative prosperity, yielding to no clamour, impelled by no fear—except, indeed, that provident fear, which is the mother of safety—you had anticipated the evil day, and, long before its advent, had trampled on every impediment to the free circulation of the Creator's bounty?

When you are again exhorting a suffering people to fortitude under their privations, when you are telling them, "These are the chastenings of an all-wise and merciful Providence, sent for some inscrutable but just and beneficent purpose—it may be, to humble our pride, or to punish our unfaithfulness, or to impress us with the sense of our own nothingness and dependence on His mercy;" when you are thus addressing your suffering fellow-subjects, and encouraging them to bear without repining the dispensations of Providence, may God grant that by your decision of this night, you may have laid in store for yourselves the consolation of reflecting that such calamities are, in truth, the dispensations of Providence—that they have not been caused, they have not been aggravated by laws of man, restricting in the hour of scarcity the supply of food!

Debate again adjourned; and, after extending over seven more nights, making a total of twelve nights, the resolution was confirmed by a majority of 97.

## THANKS TO THE ARMY IN INDIA.

MARCH 2, 1846.

SIR ROBERT PEEL rose and took his stand at the table, when Mr. Bright interposed, and begged leave to present a petition. It purported to be from Reading, and to pray that the House would not vote thanks to the Indian army, as the troops were engaged in an unjust and impolitic warfare.

Sir R. Peel then spoke as follows: I am about to propose that one of the highest rewards that can be bestowed upon successful valour shall be conferred by this House. I am about to propose that the thanks of the Commons of this great empire shall be given to the officers and men who recently on the banks of the Sutlej, under very trying circumstances, by their discipline, by their fortitude, by their brilliant valour, have sustained the reputation of their country, and proved themselves worthy of the service to which they belong. And I was prepared, until I was interrupted by the hon. gentleman the member for the city of Durham, to believe that it would be

impossible that any body of Englishmen could be found, who, seeing what were the circumstances of unprovoked aggression which called forth the exertions of these gallant men—seeing what, in a just cause, was their devotion to the interests of their country—would sign a petition grudging the grateful acknowledgment of courage and devotion which we propose to offer. [Much cheering.]

The resolutions with which I shall conclude will not touch upon any matter of purely political concern, but are framed in conformity with established usage—that usage being consonant with reason and justice. The resolutions will be confined to the acknowledgment of military skill, ability, and valour; and those who may be disposed, if any there be, to question the policy of the Indian government, will not be in the slightest degree compromised by giving a ready acquiescence in the motion I shall submit. However convinced I may be of the justice, the moderation, and the wisdom which have characterized the conduct of my gallant friend, the governor-general, yet I shall studiously abstain, in the observations which I make, from any reference to matters of public policy, excepting such as is necessary to elucidate the military operations which are the subject of the resolutions I shall move. With the position, with the government, with the population of the Sikh territory, we have become familiar through events that have occurred within the last few years. The state of the country and the history of the Punjaub are probably well known to all whom I am addressing, from the relation in which we stood towards it during our operations in the neighbouring country of Afghanistan. The House is probably well aware that by the ability and energy of an individual (Runjeet Sing) supremacy was established by him in the Punjaub; and that for many years, through that ability and energy, he ruled the destinies of that great country, and kept in subjection and subordination a powerful army. Since his death, which took place in the year 1839, the government of the Punjaub has presented a series of acts of cruelty, of intrigue, of a rapid succession of governors, in consequence of the murder of the predecessor by the successor; it has exhibited a picture of licentiousness and debauchery so extravagant, that it might be calculated to provoke a smile if it were not for the influence such licentiousness and debauchery must exercise over the welfare of millions. The acts of that government have been mainly directed by that powerful soldiery over which Runjeet Sing established his sway; but which since his death has been in the constant habit of controlling the conduct of the civil authorities, and even of the military commanders, by repeated acts of insubordination, and repeated murders, for the purpose of extorting increased pay. Perhaps the best idea one can give of the anomalous condition of affairs, and of the difficulties of speculating upon any acts that may be committed, or upon any measure that may be resorted to is this—that it is quite clear that the main object of the governors of that country, and of the principal landed proprietors, and chiefs, has been to provoke collision with the British army, not for the purpose of resenting any wrong, or of sustaining the military reputation of their country, but of freeing themselves from subjection to an insubordinate and licentious force, by provoking a conflict with Great Britain, in which that force should fall a sacrifice. That has been the main object, and the strange principle of public policy, that has for some time guided the decisions and regulated the acts of the rulers of the Punjaub. I well know what was the object of my friend, Sir Henry Hardinge, in undertaking the government of India. He made great sacrifices from a sense of public duty; my gallant friend held a prominent place in the councils of her Majesty: he was, I believe, without any reference to party divisions, held in general esteem in this House, as well by his political opponents as by his political friends. He was regarded by the army of this country as its friend, because he was the friend of justice to all ranks of that army. It was proposed to him at a time of life when, perhaps, ambition is a less powerful stimulus than it might have been at an earlier period—it was proposed to him to relinquish his place in the councils of his Sovereign—to forego the satisfaction he must have felt at what he could not fail to see, that he was an object of general respect and esteem. He separated himself from that family which constituted the chief happiness of his life, for the purpose of performing a public duty he owed to his Sovereign and his country, by taking the arduous and responsible situation of chief governor of our Indian possessions. He went out with a high military reputation, solicitous to establish his fame in connection with our Indian empire, not by means of conquest,



or the exhibition of military skill and valour, but by obtaining for himself a name in the annals of India as the friend of peace, and through the promotion of the social interests and welfare of the inhabitants. It was mainly on account of the military character and high reputation of my gallant friend that he was enabled to control and keep in check the aspirations of more ardent and impetuous minds bent upon the invasion and conquest of the Punjaub.

The view which my gallant friend took of the policy to be pursued in regard to the Punjaub, was shortly this: he thought the dominions of the British Crown in India were sufficient for every purpose—that the interests of the empire would not be promoted by the addition of the Punjaub to the possessions already subject to our own rule. He was determined, therefore, to resist any temptation to territorial aggrandizement. His desire was to see a native government established in the Punjaub, capable of maintaining its independence, of restoring subordination in the ranks of a great army, composed of men of high natural courage, of great physical strength, accustomed to discipline, and trained to military habits by European officers of distinguished reputation. His wish was, that a Sikh government should be established. He deprecated the formation of a Mussulman government, or the domination of any other than Sikh authorities. At the same time that he was determined to resist the temptations to direct aggression, he refused repeated proposals that were made to him to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Punjaub. Although nothing could have been more easy; although but a word from him would have been necessary to induce the Mussulman inhabitants of the Punjaub to rise against the Sikh authorities, who were conducting themselves in a manner so irreconcilable with sound policy or common sense, he resolved steadily to adhere to the line he had chalked out; to abstain from all interference in the domestic affairs of the Punjaub; and to observe literally every obligation of good faith.

But while that was his view of the policy that ought to be pursued, he was not insensible to the danger to which our Indian empire was constantly exposed from the maintenance on its frontier of a profligate and debauched government, controlled by an insubordinate and licentious army. My gallant friend, therefore, took all precautions. He had to guard a frontier extending on the banks of the Sutlej at least 100 miles. The frontier from Ferozepore to Roopur was at least 100 miles; from Ferozepore to Ludiana about 77 miles. My gallant friend, cautiously abstaining from the collection of any force on the frontier which could justify aggression, or even remonstrance, on the part of the Lahore government, took those precautions which would effectually prevent successful attack on their part. At Ferozepore he stationed a force of about 8,000 men, consisting of one European regiment, seven regiments of native infantry, two regiments of native cavalry, twenty-four light guns, and had mounted in position at Ferozepore thirty or thirty-five pieces of heavy artillery. He intended this to be the advanced post of the British army on the western side of the frontier. At a distance of about seventy-six miles to the eastward, higher up the Sutlej, at Ludiana, he collected a force of about 5,000 men. My gallant friend thought that these two armies, or two divisions of an army, stationed about seventy-six miles from each other, acting on the flanks of any force from the Punjaub, induced by caprice or by the temerity of their rulers to invade the British territory, would be sufficient to keep it in effectual control. At a distance more in the interior, namely, at Umballa, he stationed another division, of 7,500 men at the least. My gallant friend was undoubtedly under the impression that it was highly improbable that any attack would be made by the army of the Punjaub upon the British positions. He knew that no conduct on his part could provoke or justify such an attack; and he felt every assurance that could be felt, so far as justice and reason sanctioned the inference, that the army of the Punjaub would not be mad enough to seek a conflict with the British forces on the left bank of the Sutlej.

There were good reasons why my gallant friend did not keep together for the last two or three years an immense British and native army on the banks of the Sutlej. Constant efforts were made by the government and by the military leaders of the army of the Punjaub to corrupt our native troops. The constitution of the army of the Punjaub is purely democratic: the private soldiers elect representatives, five in number from each company, to control their officers, to depose them when they

think fit, or to subject them to death when it is deemed expedient. The pay of an infantry soldier of the Punjaub is about 25s. a month; while the pay of a sepoy in her Majesty's service is only about 14s. or 15s. a month. Constant exertions were made, by direct and indirect means, aided by community of language and of religion, to shake the fidelity of the native troops; but I rejoice to say that they were made without success. The loyalty of the sepoys, with scarcely a single exception, has been untainted. All the offers of a profligate government and a licentious soldiery were unavailing; but still it was prudent in my gallant friend not to bring together on the frontier, for an indefinite time and for no specific object, an immense native force, seeing that within a few miles they would be exposed to the injurious example of a soldiery free from all restraint, and constantly resorting to threats of actual violence towards their leaders. There were, therefore, political reasons for not keeping our troops, as it were in immediate contact with such an enemy, and there were military reasons equally powerful.

It was, in the first place, impossible, if aggression were intended, to foresee at what point an invasion would be made. On the left bank of the Sutlej were many states belonging to the Punjaub, and some of the chiefs of those states men of doubtful fidelity. In those dominions on the left bank of the Sutlej are many forts of considerable size and strength. A force controlled by no government, impelled by the fear of losing its pay, or the hope of extorting more, is not governed by ordinary considerations of prudence like the armies of regular states; and if the army of the Punjaub meditated a sudden irruption into the British territory, it was difficult to foresee at what point the descent would be made. Between Ferozepore and Roopur there are not fewer than twenty fords available for the passage of troops; nor is it easy to ascertain their exact position, since, from the nature of the river, they are constantly changing. My gallant friend, thought, therefore, that true military policy recommended the course he has pursued, not that his whole army should be concentrated on the banks of the Sutlej, but that our territory should be guarded by a sufficient force stationed at Ferozepore and Loodiana. Seeing the superior force of cavalry in the army of the Punjaub, the desperate rashness of a licentious army not governed by the ordinary rules of conduct, it was within the limit of possibility that a dash might be made at Delhi, or some vital part of the Indian Empire. My gallant friend, therefore, most wisely and prudently, kept a considerable force at Umballa, seventy-six miles to the south-east from Loodiana, and a still larger body of troops in the neighbourhood of Delhi. This whole force was assembled by way of precaution against the possible attempts of the Lahore army; and it consisted in the whole of not fewer than thirty regiments of native infantry, of nine regiments of European infantry, of twelve regiments of native cavalry, and of three regiments of European cavalry. All this was quite consistent with forbearance on the part of the Governor-general, and with his determination to be seduced by no temptation to aggression on the enemy.

It is quite clear that my gallant friend the Governor-general did take every precaution to ensure the safety of the British dominions in India, in case of sudden and unprovoked attack. In the early part of the year, at the time when he was occupied with his functions as Governor-general, and when it was most material that he should perform them in conjunction with his council at Calcutta: in a minute, dated on the 16th June, he submitted to the council his opinion that our relations with the court of Lahore became so doubtful, that, great as was the inconvenience of separating the Governor-general and his council, it was desirable, with reference exclusively to Indian interests, that he should proceed to the left bank of the Sutlej, in order that on the spot he might be enabled to give such directions as appeared necessary, and which, if given at the distance of a thousand miles, might be inappropriate. The unanimous opinion of the members of the council was, that it was for the public interest that the Governor-general should proceed to join the army; and, in conformity with this advice, in the month of October he took his departure for the left bank of the Sutlej. Up to an early period in December, the opinion of my gallant friend (Sir Henry Hardinge) was, that there would be no irruption from the right bank of the Sutlej into the British territory. He felt confident that the Sikhs must be convinced that such an attempt could only end in signal defeat, and therefore that it would not be made. So far as he could reason from experience, he had a right to

arrive at this conclusion. In 1843, the army of Lahore left the capital and advanced to the Sutlej; but after remonstrance on our part it retired again and abandoned the enterprise. In 1844, exactly the same conduct was observed; the Punjaub army eager for pay, or for booty, if pay could not be obtained, and, instigated by the government and the chiefs, appeared to contemplate an interruption; but in 1844, as in 1843, the army withdrew to the interior. Accounts, however, reached my gallant friend towards the end of November last, which led him to believe that an invasion of the British territory was seriously menaced. The House will find by the papers recently presented by command of her Majesty, that on the 20th November, Major Broadfoot addressed a letter to the Commander-in-chief, and another to the Governor-general, to this effect:—

“GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S AGENCY, Nov. 20, 1845.

“Sir—Since I had the honour of waiting on your excellency to-day, I have received Lahore letters of the 18th instant (morning). During the night of the 17th the chiefs had agreed on, and the Durbar had ordered in writing, the following plan of operations. The army was to be divided into seven divisions, one to remain at Lahore, and the rest to proceed against Koopur and our hills, Loodiana, Hurreekkee, Ferozepore, and Scinde, while one was to proceed to Peshawur; and a force under Rajah Golab Singh was to be sent to Attock.”

The decision then taken by the Lahore durbar was, that four divisions were to be employed in an attack upon the British territory, but they were not to make a concentrated or simultaneous movement; and the policy of the course adopted by the Governor-general was thus demonstrated. The Lahore army, in four divisions, was to make four separate attacks on different points along the river—the first division was to force the eastern extremity of the line; another to attack Loodiana; a third pass the river at Hurreekkee; and the fourth attack Ferozepore. Those divisions were to consist of about 8,000 men each. The House will see by reference to the papers laid before them how difficult it was for any person, even the most experienced, to speculate on the decision to which the governing powers at Lahore might arrive. They will see, too, that the ministers, or those who held the reins of government, spent their days in such continuous drunkenness and debauchery, that no resolution of theirs could be depended on. An account written by the agent at Lahore, to the secretary to government, dated Umballah, November 21st, founded on information received direct from Lahore, presents this picture of the councils of the Punjaub:—“The Ranee (that is, the regent, the mother of the infant Maharajah) complained that whilst the troops were urging the march, they were still going home to their villages as fast as they got their pay; and Sirdar Sham Singh Attareewallah declared his belief that unless something was done to stop this, he would find himself on his way to Ferozepore with empty tents. The bait of money to be paid, and to accompany them was also offered, and at length the durbar broke up at two p.m. Great consultations took place in the afternoon; but I know only one result, that the Ranee had to give her lover his formal dismissal, and that he (Rajah Lal Singh) actually went into the camp of the Sawars he is to command, and pitched his tent. What the Ranee says is quite true of the sepoy dispersing to their houses; the whole affair has so suddenly reached its present height, that many of the men themselves think it will come to nothing, and still more who had taken their departure do not believe it serious enough to go back. On the day after this scene took place, *i.e.*, the 19th, the usual stream of sepoy, natives of the protected states, who had got their pay, poured across the Sutlej, at Hurreekkee, on the way to their homes.”

There appears, also, an account of another conversation, in those papers, which took place between the Rajah Lal Singh and Bhaee Ram Singh, one of the principal officers and advisers of the Lahore government, and who seems to have been the only one of them in whom, from his character and wisdom, the slightest confidence could be placed. In a letter from Lahore, dated the 24th day of November, the following conversation was detailed: Bhaee Ram Singh, addressing Lal Singh, said—“The English have interfered in no affairs of the Khalsa; what is the wisdom of your making (religious) war at the bidding of the soldiery? None of the nobles have discovered the real intentions of the English. The Governor-general’s agent,

who is a steady friend, has written in the plainest terms, that the English government desires only friendship like that of the late Maharaja Runjeet Singh; but that if any thing wrong is done by the Sikh army, the rulers of the kingdom will be held responsible, for rulers must account for the acts of their troops and subjects. Be cautious how you march to Hureekie with the troops.' 'The Rajah said, 'Bhaee Sahib, what can I do? if I remain, the soldiery seize me by the throat.'"

In a word, the councils of the darbar seem to have been shifting from day to day, and no one could speculate with any degree of confidence as to the probable result.

On the 9th of December, the Governor-general, thinking our relations with the Punjab very critical, and that it was desirable to take every precaution against any sudden irruption, gave orders that the division of troops at Umballah, consisting of 7,500 men, should move towards the Sutlej. On December 11, the very day on which the Lahore army crossed the Sutlej, the British and native troops of that division were on their march from Umballah to the frontier. The whole proceedings of the Governor-general and the Commander-in-chief, subsequently to that day, as well as before it, were characterized by the greatest prudence, skill, and foresight. From Umballah the troops marched to a place called Buseean, where, owing to the prudent precautions of the Governor-general, they found an ample supply of food and stores. It was resolved that a junction should be effected with the Loodiana division, and that it would be better to incur some risk at Loodiana, rather than forego the advantage of a junction with the Loodiana division of the army. Those troops advanced accordingly towards Ferozepore, and learned by the way that the army of Lahore, amounting to not less than 60,000 men, had crossed the river, and were prepared to attack the British army. The expectations of the Governor-general were entirely justified by the result. There were in Ferozepore 7,500 men, 35 heavy guns in position, and 24 pieces of field artillery, in addition to the heavy ordnance. The army of Lahore shrunk from the attack of so formidable a post, and Ferozepore was entirely safe, according to the anticipations which had been entertained by the Governor-general. The army of Lahore, not venturing to attack Ferozepore, determined to give battle to the British forces on their march from Umballah, and on the 18th of December made a sudden attack on them. On that day the troops had reached Moodkee, after having marched 150 miles by forced marches. The men were suffering severely from want of water, and from exhaustion, and yet such was their discipline and gallantry, that they repelled the whole of the attacking army, though greatly superior to them in number, defeating a force treble their amount, and succeeding in the capture of 17 of their guns. The army of Lahore, thus repulsed by our forces advancing from Umballah, retired within very formidable entrenchments at Ferozeshah. Those entrenchments, consisting of strong breastworks, were in the form of a parallelogram, of which the opposite faces were a mile, and half a mile in length respectively. In the face of those formidable works, protected by 150 guns of heavy calibre and excellent workmanship, and defended by near 60,000 men, the Governor-general, and the Commander-in-chief determined to effect a junction with the division of the army which was stationed at Ferozepore. The troops advanced accordingly within three miles of the enemy's position, and manoeuvred on his left flank; but the Commander-in-chief having given previous notice to Sir J. Littler, made a march to his left, and on the 21st December effected a junction with the Ferozepore division, which thus gave an addition of 7,500 men. At this time there remained but three hours to sunset. It was resolved, however, to attack the position of the enemy. My gallant friend (the Governor-general) offered his services as second in command, services which were cheerfully and promptly accepted by the Commander-in-chief. Determined not to wait till next morning, the instant they effected their junction with the division under Sir John Littler, the commanders resolved to make an attack upon the entrenched camp. The result, Sir, of that attack proved the valour of our European and Indian forces in a pre-eminent degree, and has entitled them to the warmest acknowledgments of this House and of the country. The night of the 21st December was one of the most memorable in the military annals of the British Empire. The enemy were well defended within strongly fortified entrenchments—their guns were served with the greatest precision, and told on our advancing columns with great effect. The right of the British army was led by the Commander-in-chief, whilst the left centre was

headed by Sir H. Hardinge. Our forces made an attack on the enemy's camp during the three hours which as yet remained of daylight; but they had not sufficient time to complete that victory, which was gloriously achieved on the following day. The British army, however, made good their attack, and occupied a part of the enemy's camp. In the middle of the night the camp took fire, and further conflict was for a time suspended in consequence; but as soon as it had ceased the army of Lahore brought forward their heavy artillery, and poured a most destructive fire upon our troops. The details of those occurrences have been given with admirable clearness in the despatches of both commanders; but there have been private letters received which speak of them with less of formality, and perhaps give truer and more faithful accounts of these actions than the official documents. Perhaps the House will excuse me if I read an extract from a private letter from the Governor-general to a member of his own family. The right hon. baronet then read as follows:—"The night of the 21st was the most extraordinary of my life. I bivouacked with the men, without food or covering, and our nights are bitter cold. A burning camp in our front, our brave fellows lying down under a heavy cannonade, which continued during the whole night, mixed with the wild cries of the Sikhs, our English hurrah, the tramp of men, and the groans of the dying. In this state, with a handful of men, who had carried the batteries the night before, I remained till morning, taking very short intervals of rest by lying down with various regiments in succession, to ascertain their temper, and revive their spirits."

My gallant friend, as you see, spent that eventful night passing from regiment to regiment, cheering the men by his own example of constancy and courage—doing all that human means could do to ensure victory to our arms. "I found," my gallant friend goes on to say—"I found myself again with my old friends of the 29th, 31st, 50th, and 9th, all in good heart"—(regiments with which he had served in the Peninsula)—and with them that regiment which has earned immortal fame in the annals of the British army—her Majesty's 80th regiment—"My answer to all and every man was, that we must fight it out, attack the enemy vigorously at day-break, beat him, or die honourably in the field. The gallant old general, kind-hearted, and heroically brave, entirely coincided with me."

Let the House observe how anxious my gallant friend is to do justice to his companions in arms. "During the night I occasionally called on our brave English soldiers to punish the Sikhs when they came too close and were impudent; and when morning broke we went at it in true English style. Gough was on the right. I placed myself, and dear little Arthur [his son] by my side, in the centre, about thirty yards in front of the men, to prevent their firing, and we drove the enemy without a halt from one extremity of the camp to the other, capturing thirty or forty guns as we went along, which fired at twenty paces from us, and were served obstinately. The brave men drew up in an excellent line, and cheered Gough and myself as we rode up the line, the regimental colours lowering to me as on parade. The mournful part is the heavy loss I have sustained in my officers. I have had ten aides-de-camp *hors de combat*, five killed and five wounded. The fire of grape was very heavy from 100 pieces of cannon; the Sikh army, drilled by French officers, and the men the most warlike in India."

From my affectionate regard for that gallant man, I am proud to be enabled to exhibit him on such a night as that of the 21st of December—going through the camp—passing from regiment to regiment—keeping up the spirits of the men—encouraging them—animating their ardour—and having lost ten aides-de-camp out of twelve—placing his young son, a boy of seventeen or eighteen years of age, in the front of the line, in order that the British troops might be induced not to fire on the enemy, but drive them back by the force of the British bayonet. It was characteristic of the man to read these details. He had two sons present, one of whom was a civilian, and the other in the army. On the night of the 21st, he sent the civilian to the rear of the army, saying that his presence disturbed him, and that if he refused to retire, he would send him away in arrest a prisoner; but the presence, he said, of his younger son, an officer, whose duty called him to the field, only made the father more desperately resolute in the discharge of his duty. On the 22nd, after the battle was over, he took his eldest son, when visiting the sepoy and the wounded, and he showed them a Governor-general of India who had lost his hand, and the son of a

Governor-general who had lost his foot, and endeavoured to console them in their sufferings by proving to them that men in the highest rank were exposed to the same casualties as themselves.

As I before observed, the accounts of all the military operations are given with admirable clearness in the despatches laid before the House. They must have been read with such attention by every member of the House, that I will not weaken their effect by minute reference to military details. The pride and satisfaction we must all derive from those gallant exploits are no doubt counterbalanced by deep regret for the loss of so many men of the highest distinction and promise. We have had the misfortune—the great misfortune—of losing that gallant officer who on former occasions has so frequently distinguished himself—Sir Robert Sale. He, Sir, has closed a long career of glory by that death to which I believe he himself looked forward and which he coveted—that death in the field which entitles me to say that, even in his own estimation, he was "*felix etiam opportunitate mortis*." Sir, I do hope that this House will on no distant day mark their esteem and respect for the memory of Sir Robert Sale, by humbly representing to her Majesty their unanimous wish, that she may be pleased to record the gratitude of the country by the erection of a monument to Sir Robert Sale.

We have, Sir, also, to deplore the loss of Sir J. M'Caskill, to whom a brief but touching testimony of approbation is borne in the despatch of the Commander-in-chief, as well as of one of the most eminent men in the civil and military services of India—Major Broadfoot. In that gentleman the highest confidence was placed by every one who came in contact with him. He obtained the applause of every civil and military authority in the country, and his prudence and skill as a civilian were only equalled by his ardour and bravery in the field. He was, I believe, the last of three brothers, all of whom have died in the service of their country on the field of battle. Major Broadfoot was present with Sir R. Sale during the siege of Jellalabad, and took a most conspicuous part in its defence. It is mournful, Sir, that we should have to deplore the loss in the same conflict of two gallant men so devoted to their country's service as Sir R. Sale and Major Broadfoot.

I shall not refer by name to officers of lower rank who have fallen in this conflict; for where all were so distinguished, it must be invidious to particularize; but whatever their rank, I can assure their surviving relatives that their country will do justice to their memory; I hope the thanks of the House will be conveyed to all the men of every regiment engaged in this brilliant exploit without exception. If there were occasions on which the reputation for valour of some regiments may appear not to have been upheld, considering their former services—their known gallantry—their severe losses—the remembrance of one moment's default is altogether obliterated by the recollection of their former eminent conduct, and of the services they rendered on that very day. I am quite certain, Sir, that the men of her Majesty's 62nd regiment, of the 14th native infantry, and the other gallant native regiment on the flank of her Majesty's 62nd regiment, will not suffer in the estimation of the country; that the willing thanks of this House will be given without exception, to all the regiments engaged in this action.

I hope, Sir, there will be an unanimous acquiescence in this vote of thanks to the European and Indian army. I trust I have said nothing that can provoke discussion or dissent in any quarter of the House. There is nothing in the resolution to which any man—whatever may be his opinions as to the policy of the Governor-general—can object. Let us on this occasion keep political and party differences altogether in the background. Let us all, without any division of political party, concur in bearing testimony to the brilliant services of men so worthy of the name of Englishmen. There never has been a greater example of extreme forbearance, strict justice, and a resolve to resist all the temptations to which the army was exposed—there never was a greater combination of those high qualities with the most brilliant talent and valour in defence of the British empire in India. The gallantry of those who fell in that conflict will not be without its fruits. Their lives will not have been sacrificed in vain. The remembrance of their conduct constitutes one of the brightest possessions—one of the great defences of this country. When we reflect what can be effected by discipline and valour, such as was manifested by our countrymen on these memorable days, we feel that in a just cause our country must be victorious. The

memory of those men who have fallen through their devotion to their country will long serve to animate the British army. It will make us proud of that name which we bear, and encourage us, if need be, to emulate their heroic exertions, and exhibit equal devotion, equal perseverance, equal courage, in the cause of our common country. [*Great and enthusiastic cheering greeted the right hon. baronet from all sides of the House in the progress, and at the conclusion, of his speech.*] He then moved a series of resolutions, to the effect—that the thanks of the House be conveyed to Sir Henry Hardinge, Sir Hugh Gough, and the officers, non-commissioned officers, and private soldiers of the European and Indian army, for their eminent services in the battles of the 18th, 21st, and 22nd of December, 1845.

The resolutions having been seconded by Lord John Russell, were put *seriatim*, and carried *nem con*.

## REPEAL OF THE CORN-LAWS.

MARCH 2, 1846.

House in Committee on the Customs and Corn Importation Acts. On the question, "That in lieu of the duties on the importation of corn, grain, meal, or flour, there shall be paid until the 1st of February, 1849, the following duties,"—

Mr. Villiers rose and moved as an amendment, "To leave out the words, 'in lieu of,' in order to insert the words 'All duties on imported corn do now cease and determine.'"

SIR ROBERT PEELE: Sir, I presume it is not the wish of the great body of the House that we should continue this debate, to which twelve days have already been devoted. There are some points raised in this debate with respect to which I should wish to give some explanation; but as I shall probably have other opportunities of offering that explanation, I shall, in what I have now to say, simply confine myself to the question whether it be desirable that the repeal of the corn duties should be immediate, or whether they should continue, as her Majesty's government propose, for a period of three years. Now, I am bound to say that if you look singly and abstractedly to the emergency which exists in Ireland—I am bound to say, that in that case I think the better measure would be the immediate suspension of all duties. Suppose we had taken the course pursued in former years, and had, by act of parliament, suspended the duties for a period of eight months—that is to say, until the month of August or September next, there would then be an absolute repeal of all duties, or the maintenance of a nominal duty only; but we should have to determine in the interim what provision should be made with respect to the period when the suspension would expire. Those who contend that the Corn-laws ought to be immediately repealed, would of course be perfectly satisfied with a measure carrying out their object. An immediate repeal would provide for the accomplishment of their purpose, and it would also provide for the removal of all duties during the approaching scarcity in Ireland. But that is not the universal opinion. There are many who think the Corn-laws ought not to be repealed. Her Majesty's government having to decide upon this question on the 20th of December, after they had been recalled to office, thought that it might be possible at the same time to make provision for the emergency in Ireland, and to lay the foundation of a settlement of the Corn-law question. I have frankly admitted that the provision made for the present emergency is not quite so complete as would be made if you removed the duty altogether. But what her Majesty's government had to consider was, on the 20th of December, as I have already stated, how they could best effect the double object of providing for the emergency in Ireland, and at the same time of trying to gain the assent of the legislature to laying the foundation for the total removal of all duties; and in the hope of reconciling those two objects in the best way possible, her Majesty's government framed the proposition which is now under the consideration of the House. With respect to the apprehensions of scarcity in Ireland, we certainly do not altogether remove the duties on grain, but we propose to remove the duty altogether on Indian corn; we propose to remove altogether the duty on rice; and though not, perhaps, so nearly affecting the people of Ireland, we propose to remove it also altogether from cattle and meat. With respect to wheat, too, we place

that in a very different position to what it was in before; and we materially reduce the duty, which at present absolutely prevents you taking out of bond that superior description of wheat which is most important for the purpose of mixing with the inferior descriptions which enter into the market, and affect the average prices which regulate the duty on the other. I have before me a memorial signed by the whole of the millers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and they state that the general weight of the bushel of corn in ordinary years averages from about 61 lbs. to 63 lbs., whilst in the present year it is not above 58 lbs. They say it would be of the utmost importance if they could have access to the better qualities of wheat which are in bond, for the purpose of mixing with the inferior wheat, and they therefore pray for immediate repeal. The duty at present upon that wheat, however, is 17s.; and as there is a great quantity of inferior wheat in the market, the price appears to be low, and the duty consequently remains high, so high as to operate almost as a prohibition to taking out of bond that quality of wheat which it is of the utmost importance to have for mixing with the inferior wheat. The present proposal of her Majesty's government certainly does not remove the duty on wheat altogether, but it will considerably reduce the present duty of 17s.; and it will do more—it will give a guarantee that in no one case can the duty rise above 10s., and there must be a very rapid fall in the price of wheat, which is not to be expected, to bring the duty up to 10s. The maximum duty at present is 20s. Under the proposal of her Majesty's government the maximum would be 10s., and it is not probable even if the price should fall to some extent, that it would be more than 5s. or 6s. for some time to come. That is the proposal of her Majesty's government with respect to wheat. Then with respect to barley. The present duty is 7s.: we propose, certainly, not to reduce the duty to a merely nominal one; but we believe that it will not exceed 2s. instead of 7s. The duty upon oats is now 6s. Under the proposal of her Majesty's government it will not exceed 2s.; but both in the case of barley and oats, observe the guarantee which is given as an encouragement to importation. In barley there would be a guarantee that the duty should not rise above 5s., and in the case of oats not above 4s. a quarter. The duty on rye is at present 8s. 6d. Under the proposal of the government it will be reduced to 2s. The present duty on beans is 6s. 6d., which will also be reduced to 2s. On peas, a similar reduction will be made. I am speaking now of the apprehension of a scarcity of food in Ireland; and I admit that the proposal is less perfect than if the duty had been altogether removed. But I say, that in the present state of public feeling in this country, you cannot look at this question abstractedly. I think it would be a very inconsiderate course at the present moment to propose a mere suspension of the duty, to endure for eight months; for we should make no advance by such a suspension towards the final settlement of the question. At the end of that period the difficulties in the way of dealing with the question would be just as great as ever: the public feeling would be equally excited; and I confess I cannot see at all how a suspension of duties for eight months would tend to a satisfactory settlement of the question; and it is of paramount importance to be certain of the footing on which the Corn-laws shall hereafter stand. My opinion is decidedly that it is for the public interest that the question of the Corn-laws should be either at once settled, or that the foundation for a settlement should now be laid, and that there should be a certain assurance on the part of the country that at no remote period the duties upon the importation of foreign grain should cease. The proposal of her Majesty's government gives that assurance. I was certainly impressed from what passed the other night, with the belief that the hon. gentlemen on this side of the House were inclined to prefer the immediate repeal. When I use the word "repeal," I mean the reduction to a nominal duty. The hon. member for Somersetshire certainly did declare positively in favour of immediate repeal. I may be erroneous in my impression of the degree of assent which the hon. member gave to the immediate repeal—I speak merely hypothetically; but when the hon. gentleman spoke, his declaration was certainly received as implying a preference of immediate repeal, nor was any dissent then expressed by him. Her Majesty's government have proposed a suspension of the repeal for the period of three years, partly from the impression that that proposal was preferable in itself to the immediate repeal, partly from a hope that it would be more acceptable to those who represent the agricultural interest; and it was under the impression that the immediate repeal was viewed by many, as I know it is, most



decided friends of the agricultural interest, and the main advocates of their rights, with the same approbation which I attributed to the expressions of the hon. member for Somersetshire, that I said, as I now repeat, that if the representatives of the agricultural interest—if those best acquainted with the feelings and wishes of the agriculturists, should really prefer immediate repeal to a suspension of the repeal for three years, I have no doubt whatever that, under these circumstances, by uniting their forces with those of the hon. gentlemen who sit on the opposite side of the House, they will be enabled to carry that proposition. Should they do that, my paramount object being to lay the foundation of an adjustment of this question by the repeal of the Corn-laws, I shall accept the amended proposal of an immediate repeal. But, at the same time, my own opinion in favour of the gradual removal of duties proposed by government remains unchanged. The hon. gentleman the member for Durham threatens us with a continued agitation. Sir, I am very sorry for it. I think such an agitation will be unreasonable. I cannot answer for the agricultural party as to the course they would pursue in case a great change of this kind were carried; but I don't think an attempt would be made by them to disturb a settlement of this kind when once made. [An hon. member: I think there would be.] I am sorry to hear that observation, because that might certainly justify agitation. But, if there were a general acquiescence in the measure, I must say I think that a continued agitation on the part of the Anti-Corn-law League, considering that there was a parliamentary assurance that those duties would cease after a lapse of three years, and that, during the interval, there would be but a low duty as compared with the existing duty, I must say I think that a continued agitation under such circumstances would be unreasonable. I must say, moreover, that I do not think that agitation would be successful. The hon. gentleman says, that year after year a motion would be made for absolute repeal. Now, it might be made; but as year after year the time would be approaching when absolute repeal must take place, I cannot think that much interest would be attached to the motion. I think there are a great number of persons who would then withdraw from the Anti-Corn-law League—a great number of persons who would say that this is not an unreasonable settlement. Considering the differences which prevail upon the subject—considering the prospect that the duty is to expire in three years, and that every day would be bringing us nearer to the period of an absolute repeal of the duty, or at least of its reduction to a nominal amount, I cannot help thinking—considering also that the duty would be much lower than it has hitherto been—I cannot help thinking that whatever may be the menaces of continued agitation, that agitation would be of a very different character from that which would prevail if no attempt were made to adjust this question. If we had proposed a total and immediate repeal, I think we must have abandoned all hope of success. When a proposal is made, people are naturally inclined to take a different view of it from that which they would take if some other proposal had been made; and I cannot help thinking, that if we had proposed an immediate repeal, the hon. member for Somersetshire would not have expressed for it any preference. I do think that if the proposal of her Majesty's government had been for immediate repeal, we would have met with such a degree of opposition, that we must have abandoned all hope of carrying the measure. Our proposal has been made partly from a preference for the motion abstractedly on its own merits, and partly from a sincere desire to meet the wishes and to conciliate the feelings of those who are the immediate representatives of the agricultural interest; but if immediate repeal be carried in preference to deferred repeal, I intend to accept the amendment. Yes, my conviction of the policy of an adjustment of the question is such, that I intend to do what I can to promote the success of that amended measure; but I cannot be answerable for the effect of such an amendment. It will not affect my own course; but it is impossible I can answer for its ultimate success. I prefer the deferred repeal to immediate repeal, for this reason, that her Majesty's government intend to propose other measures connected with the landed interest. One objection to deferred repeal is, that it will lead to two prices, one now and one at the end of three years. But I do not see the panic now. I mean a panic greatly depressing the price of wheat. But I have a strong impression that we are depressing the price of wheat by this protracted discussion. I have a strong impression that the owner of every quarter of wheat now sold is receiving 1s. 6d. or 2s. less than he would receive if this ques-

tion were settled. It being quite notorious that you can have no great supply from the continent, there being other countries since we began this debate, from which exportation has been prohibited and importation encouraged; I cannot help thinking that there may be, on the part of the tenant-farmer, a perfect assurance that the degree of competition with which he will have to contend will be very trifling indeed; and if he once knew that the mind of the legislature were made up on the subject of the corn trade, my own impression is, that there would be a slight and immediate increase of price. Considering, too, that we accompany this measure with another for affording facilities for the drainage of land—[Hon. members: They will not be accepted.] There is no compulsion to accept them; but, if they be accepted, there will be an opportunity in cases of settled property of raising money for improvements on more moderate terms than it can be procured for at present. I cannot help thinking also, that as it will be known there is to be a competition at the end of three years, the minds of landed proprietors and of tenants will be directed to the improvement of land, and that at the end of three years, partly by the aid of public money, and partly by the exertions of individuals, we shall place ourselves in a more favourable position to compete with the produce of foreign countries, than if we opened the ports immediately, with the possibility of a good harvest all over the continent before us. These were the reasons which induced the government to make the proposal which they have made. We don't think there will be the panic some apprehend at the end of three years. If the foreign corn grower thinks he can overwhelm our market at a duty reduced from 4s. to 1s., I think he will be very much mistaken. If there should be a great demand here, the result will be a rise in the price of land in foreign countries, a consequent rise in the cost of production, and diminished advantages to the foreign producer. These were the general reasons which induced her Majesty's government to introduce this measure. They will do what they can to carry it; but, again, I say, if another proposal is approved of, they will not from pique or mortification abandon the measure, but will give effect to it so amended by those whom they will accept as the best judges of the plan most conducive to the agricultural interest.

The amendment was negatived, and the House resumed; committee to sit again.

## CUSTOMS AND CORN IMPORTATION REPORT.

MARCH 27, 1846.

In the debate on the second reading of the Corn Importation bill—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows:—Sir, the hon. gentleman who spoke last (Mr. Mildmay) appears to have repented of the neutrality which he observed on a former occasion, and to have determined to make up for that neutrality by the sharpness of his present attack. I have heard, indeed, from one hon. gentleman, the member for Newark, a young member of this House, that I have been treated with marked forbearance during the discussion upon this measure. I think, then, that under the circumstances I might have expected a little more indulgence from the hon. member for Winchester. I did, it is true, present two petitions, one from Manchester, and one from Liverpool; and the hon. gentleman is so captious, that he finds even in the performance of that duty grounds for making an attack upon me. All I did, however, was to state the prayer of these petitions. The petitioners are connected with the manufacturing and commercial interests of the country; and I think that the hon. gentleman, considering the community of occupation between himself and the petitioners, might have allowed them unquestioned to speak for themselves. The petition from Manchester was signed by the president of the Chamber of Commerce—a body entertaining strong political opinions, and many of whom have been connected with the agitation for the repeal of the Corn-laws. In order, however, to show the unanimity of opinion which prevailed upon this question, the petition was also signed by the president of the Commercial Association—a body holding political opinions of an opposite tendency to those entertained by the Chamber of Commerce; but they, notwithstanding, on this subject came to the same conclusion. To the same conclusion came all the bankers of Manchester; as did

also, I believe, the vast majority of the inhabitants of that town connected with great manufacturing establishments. These parties concurred in addressing a petition to this House; and they concurred in attributing the stagnation of trade to the prolongation of the debates; and expressed their opinion that the stagnation will continue until the decision of this House shall be finally pronounced upon the question: praying, therefore, that the House will, at as early a period as may be consistent with mature deliberation, come to a decision upon the subject. Sir, the hon. gentleman is a proof of how exceedingly difficult it would be to devise any measure connected with the Corn-laws which shall please all parties. But I think the hon. gentleman stands almost alone in this House upon this question. The hon. gentleman, who so violently attacks the measures of the government, says, if we had proposed a cautious measure of this nature—that the scale of duties which I propose to exist for three years should be carried into execution, and at the end of that period there should be a fixed duty—he would have been inclined to vote for such a proposal. He has not quite made up his mind whether he would vote for it or not; but still he is so favourably disposed towards it that he thinks he should have been inclined to adopt it. Well, I think he is the only man in the House who would have supported that proposition. The hon. gentleman makes another charge against me, at which I am somewhat surprised. He says that every Irish member ought to be indignant with me for interposing delay, instead of relieving the distress which prevails in Ireland. Indignant with me! I am not conscious of occasioning any delay. Circumstances may have interposed obstacles for which I feel regret; but that the hon. gentleman has any right to rouse the indignation of the Irish members against me for interposing delay in the way of extending relief to the distress which prevails in Ireland, I entirely deny; and it is a charge which I think cannot be fairly made against me by any hon. member of this House. I am extremely unwilling, at this protracted stage of the debate, to refer to personal matters; and were I a private individual, I would pass by all such accusations as I have heard made against me. I am so conscious of having acted throughout from pure and honourable motives, I am so supported by the conviction that I have abandoned no duty, and betrayed no trust—[interruption]—well, if it be your impression that I have, at least after the accusations which have been preferred, you will concede to me the privilege of defence, and will listen with patience to the answer which I have to give you. Observe, throughout these debates I have not quarrelled with any man for offering his opposition to the opinions which I now profess. I have respected in others the maintenance of their former opinions. I knew not by whom the measures which I proposed would be supported on this side of the House. I can say with truth, that I have attempted to influence no man. I have listened to the attacks made upon me with sorrow, but not with anger. I admit it is natural that hon. gentlemen should retain their opinions; but if they do not respect in me that privilege which I concede to them, at any rate, I entreat them, from a sense of justice, to hear with patience my defence. As I said, if I were a mere private individual, strong in the conviction that I have acted from nothing but a sense of duty, and from pure and honourable motives, I would have let these accusations pass by; but I am not in the situation of a private individual, and it is right that, as minister of the Crown, I should vindicate from the attacks made upon it my conduct as a minister of the Crown. I have been asked—it is not, I know, quite regular to refer to former debates, and I shall not encroach upon the rule of the House by express reference to the debates—but the House will permit me to refer in general to the questions which were put, and to the charges which were made, since I have had an opportunity of last addressing the House. It was said, then, in the course of the late debate, that I had expressed an opinion that the charge of this measure for the adjustment of the Corn-laws would have been committed with much greater propriety to other hands than mine. And yet it was observed that I had proposed to the cabinet to undertake the conduct of this measure, and that if the cabinet had been unanimous, the conduct of it would have been committed to my hands. Further, it was remarked that there was thus an apparent inconsistency between the opinion that it would have been better to submit the proposition to other hands, and my undertaking, had the cabinet concurred with me, to propose the permanent adjustment of this question, as a consequence of the temporary suspension

of the law. Sir, I did pronounce an opinion that it would have been better, under any ordinary circumstances, that others more entitled than I am to the credit of the success of this measure, should have had the conduct of it. And yet it is true that in the cabinet I did propose, if the cabinet concurred with me, to undertake the task of submitting the proposition to parliament. On the 1st of November I proposed, in concurrence with my right hon. friends, the Secretary of War and the Secretary of State for the Home Department, upon the ground of the reports from Ireland, to take that precaution against impending danger, which I thought was a natural precaution, namely, the suspension, either by an order in council or an act of parliament, of those laws prohibiting the importation of foreign corn. I renewed that proposition at the close of the same month. I believe, had the measure proposed been simply the suspension of the Corn-laws, with a guarantee that the existing system should revive, I believe—I have no grounds for not believing—that there would have been no very serious difference of opinion on the subject. There might have been a difference of opinion as to the extent of the danger in Ireland; but had the measure been merely a suspension with a guarantee of revival, or at least, that I would propose the continuance of the existing law, I am not sure that we should have had any difference of opinion on the matter. But I did distinctly refuse—I here admit it—I did distinctly refuse to undertake a guarantee for the revival of the existing law at the end of the period of suspension, and I did it upon these grounds. As I said before, I thought that suspension was a becoming and necessary measure. The right hon. gentleman, the recorder of Dublin, says that we were deluded by accounts from Ireland. He admits, however, that he was alarmed at the outset, and that the prevailing feeling through Ireland was one of alarm; but then he talked of, as unfounded, the reports made from time to time by official bodies in Ireland. It is very easy for an individual to neglect those reports; but those responsible for the well-being of the country—deeply responsible should famine and disease come without precautions being taken to meet them—what are they, what is a government to do—a government receiving reports from all quarters—from the highest authorities—from private parties the most disinterested—what, I ask, would be the position of a government which should meet such warnings with neglect? The alarm may turn out to be unfounded, and the precautions, therefore, superfluous; but do you think that when there is good ground, probable ground, for expecting a general and wide-spread famine, do you think that a government ought, in such a case, to neglect to take precautions, even should those precautions turn out to be superfluous? Are you to hesitate in averting famine which may come, because it possibly may not come? Are you to look to and depend upon chance in such an extremity? Or, good God! are you to sit in cabinet, and consider and calculate how much diarrhoea, and bloody flux, and dysentery, a people can bear before it becomes necessary for you to provide them with food? The precautions may be superfluous; but what is the danger where precautions are required? Is it not better to err on the side of precaution than to neglect it utterly? I say that, with the reports received by government, in my opinion we should not have been justified in neglecting that precaution. Of course, then, the question arose, “What will you do when the period of suspension shall have terminated?” Will you guarantee the revival of the law? That question was put to me. I said at once I cannot, and for many reasons. In the first place, in the last session of parliament I expressed a decided opinion that you could not long continue to apply different principles in respect to agriculture from those you had applied to other articles of commerce. I am told I made a sudden turn—that I surprised every one. Well, hear my defence. Speaking on the Corn-law, in the course of last session, on the resolution of the hon. member for Wolverhampton, while I opposed that resolution, I stated that I could not defend the existing law on many of the grounds on which it had theretofore been defended. I could not say that I thought the rate of wages varied with the price of corn. I could not defend the law on the ground that we ought to be independent of foreign supply. I stated expressly then, that in my opinion the same principle which formed our ordinary commercial policy must also be applied to agriculture. I was followed by the noble lord the then member for Sunderland (Earl Grey), who began his speech by stating expressly that I had made no objection to the first resolution of the hon. member for Wolverhampton. Here

are his words—he said,—“In Sir Robert Peel’s speech there had not been one word uttered attempting to contradict the two first resolutions of his hon. friend the member for Wolverhampton. Had the last resolution been worded to the effect ‘that it was expedient that all restrictions on the importation of corn be gradually abolished,’ the right hon. baronet’s speech would have been an unanswerable speech in support of the hon. member’s motion.”

Such was the speech of the noble lord. Now what was the resolution of the protection society in the month of December? Hear it, and say whether the late declaration of opinion in my case can be considered as so sudden or surprising. The protection society, I say, came to this resolution:—“That, in consequence of the declarations made by several leading members of government during the last session of parliament, it was evident that a further reduction would be attempted in the already greatly diminished amount of protection now afforded to agriculture, and that, in consequence of such interpretation being put on these declarations, an impression, well or ill-founded, is circulated, calculated to destroy all confidence in the stability of the present Corn-laws, and to arrest the progress now making in the improvement of inferior lands.”

Such was the resolution of the protection society in December last, before they were or could be aware of the measures to be proposed by government. [Mr. Hudson made a remark, which did not reach the gallery.] Will the hon. member for Sunderland have a little patience? His turn will come. Really these interruptions are very unpleasant. I continue then. When the question was put whether I would undertake a guarantee for the revival of the existing law, I said distinctly that such a guarantee on my part, after the opinions which I had expressed, would be inconsistent with my former declaration. Such a revival must have implied the permanent maintenance of the Corn-law. You must have roused all your energies in defence of it. Lords, Commons, and constituencies, must have united for the maintenance, the permanent maintenance, of the existing law. To such an attempt it was impossible that I could have been a party. Another ground, Sir, upon which I declined to guarantee the revival was, that I thought the very fact of suspension would make it almost impossible to induce parliament to re-enact the present law. It would have been said, “The system has worked tolerably well in three favourable seasons, but at the first period of pressure you suspended it; you were obliged to do so.” The proposal would then be, that after this suspension—that after this confession of the law’s weakness—this impeachment of its adequacy—you should, notwithstanding, urge at the termination of the period of suspension its permanent revival. Sir, I confess I did not think that a very wise course to adopt. It has been justly remarked, during the progress of this debate, that when the noble lord opposite (Lord John Russell), seeing how difficult it would be at times of scarcity to maintain a fixed duty, purposed that a power should be given to the Crown, by an order in council, to suspend that fixed duty—it has been truly stated that when that proposition was made, I decidedly objected to conferring such a power on the Crown. I stated that it would be futile, because the Crown, having once exercised the power of suspending the fixed duty, I felt assured, in the present state of public opinion on the Corn-laws, that it would be most difficult, or even impossible, to reimpose the duty. Now, the difficulty involved in the course proposed to me for adoption would be the same, with the difference that the fixed duty would be much lower than the actual amount of the sliding-scale. The proposal, in fact, would be that the sliding-scale having failed in its first exposure to severe trial, and it being thus found necessary to suspend it—the proposal would be, that after that suspension the same principle, worked out by the same machinery, should be re-enacted—should be again adopted. Well, supposing this course to have been adopted, at what period would it have been settled that the revival was to take place? The duties might have been suspended until September next. In the month of July, a few weeks before the time parliament must separate, what would have been the state of this House on the question of whether or no the suspension should continue? Supposing they were entertained the apprehensions which I felt, and which I still feel, that this potato disease is not a mere temporary calamity—suppose there should be good grounds, probable grounds, for believing that the potatoe crop of next year would also be affected—suppose there should be, as there will be disease in Ireland in consequence,

of want of food—suppose all these contingencies to occur—could the proposal, under the circumstances, be made that the old law should be permitted to revive? Further, suppose you are to have such a July as you had last season—such a month of continued rain as that which last year made “the boldest hold his breath for a time,” would it have been, I put it to you, would it have been under these circumstances possible to have agreed to a renewal of the old law? Sir, I was not insensible to the progress of public opinion on this point. I do not say yield to it—yield to public opinion against your convictions; but I do say that that man is unworthy of holding office who disregards the progress of public opinion on such a question as the Corn-laws; and whether or no they are to be re-enacted after a period of suspension. You say they have been already suspended and already re-enacted. You say they were suspended in 1765 and in 1793; and that on both those occasions they were re-enacted, and that precedents are all in favour of their being re-enacted. Why, good God! can any man be so blind to the progress of public opinion on the Corn-laws since the year 1765, as to say that you can apply that precedent, and because the legislature of that day could re-enact prohibitive duties, do you mean to say that we could do it now? If you act upon such principles—if you pay regard to such narrow, technical, parliamentary precedents, without reference to public opinion, then I tell you that you will involve the country in a month in inextricable confusion. I am unwilling to make any statement now; but as I foresaw, when this proposition was made, it would break up the government, and as I have the permission of her Majesty to give any explanation with respect to the causes which led to that dissolution of the government, I will, rather than enter into any statement, read to the House the declaration I made of the ground on which I acted, and which, as I foresaw it would be of great importance, I made at the time in writing; that statement of my opinions I will now read. This was on the 26th of November, after the government had instituted an inquiry into the apprehended scarcity, and taken precautions against the spread of fever that might be the consequence of that scarcity; in the instructions then issued, my right hon. friends cordially concurred. But I foresaw that the issue of those instructions would compel a suspension of the law restricting the importation of food. And this is the very point at which I wish to arrive—whether I should undertake after the suspension to propose to parliament the adjustment of the Corn-laws. I did undertake it, and under these circumstances: as I could not propose the revival of the existing law—as I thought any slight alterations in the details of the present sliding-scale, any slight modifications, would be utterly unavailing for the permanent adjustment which would be the legitimate consequence of suspension: I did undertake to do that which in ordinary circumstances I certainly think ought to have been undertaken by others, and I did engage to meet the existing emergency, and to become responsible for all the consequences of suspension. I drew up then, and I read to my colleagues, the memorandum I hold in my hand previously to the dissolution of the cabinet. (The right hon. baronet then proceeded to read the following document.)—“I cannot consent to the issue of these instructions, and undertake at the same time to maintain the existing Corn-law. Slight modifications of the existing law, as the consequence of these instructions, or immediately following them, would, in my opinion, answer no good end. The proposal of them would add to the difficulty of defending that portion of the Corn-law which it was sought to maintain. I think we ought to suspend the operation of the existing law for a limited period. There is conflicting evidence as to the degree of pressure from the scarcity of food; but there is that probability of severe pressure a few months hence that would in my opinion amply justify the precautionary measure of unrestricted import. We have written authority which would justify it, written authority which, should the anticipations of those from whom we receive it prove correct, would impose on us a heavy responsibility for having neglected a precaution which has been taken in former periods of scarcity in this country, and by some countries in Europe within the last week. But, independently of these considerations, the issue of these instructions fully justifies, if it does not require, the temporary removal of impediments to the free import of corn. They contain a proof not only that the crisis is great—not only that there is the probability of severe suffering from the scarcity of food; but the proof that we are ourselves convinced of it. It appears to me that the sus-

pension of the Corn-law would be the course most consistent with these instructions. I will not refer to the preceding discussions in the cabinet; but the issue of these instructions, placing on record our deliberate conviction as to the possible extent of the evil with which we have to contend as a new event. By acting now, the lapse of time since we last met in cabinet would be accounted for. I am prepared for one to take the responsibility of suspending the law by an order in council, or of calling parliament at a very early period, and advising in the speech from the throne the suspension of the law. I conceal from myself none of the difficulties that attend a suspension of the law. Suspension of the law will compel a very early decision on the course to be pursued in anticipation of the period when the suspension would expire. Suspension will compel a deliberate review of the whole question of agricultural protection. I firmly believe that it would be better for the country that that review should be undertaken by others. Under ordinary circumstances I should advise that it should be so undertaken; but I look now to the immediate emergency, and to the duties it imposes on a minister. I am ready to take the responsibility of meeting that emergency, if the opinions of my colleagues as to the extent of the evil, and the nature of the remedy, concur with mine."

I, therefore, Sir, thought that the adjustment of the Corn-laws would be the natural consequence of the suspension of the laws. I felt that it would be inconsistent with my duty to suspend the law, and then to run away and leave it to others to deal with the consequences. I was prepared then to propose an adjustment of the question of duties on foreign corn—I was prepared to do so had my colleagues agreed with me, notwithstanding the declaration which I made then, and which I repeat now, that under ordinary circumstances I should have preferred that the task should have been left to other hands than mine. If there be any inconsistency in that, I am ready to incur the blame of it; but I confess I think the course I adopted, the natural and fitting course for a minister in my position. I was, however, in a minority in the cabinet. When there was no longer unanimity amongst my colleagues, I despaired of success in carrying the measures I intended, and therefore the cabinet was dissolved. My hon. friend the member for Dorsetshire blames me very much because, after resigning, I wrote a letter to her Majesty stating the course I intended to pursue. He says that was a most unconstitutional and a most unusual act. Unusual I admit it to be, but the circumstances were altogether unusual. Unconstitutional I cannot admit it to be. That a privy councillor should state to his sovereign what course under very peculiar circumstances he was prepared to pursue, I cannot admit to be unconstitutional. A peer has a right to seek an audience of her Majesty, and tender his advice; a privy councillor has a right to do so also. True, my official relation to her Majesty had terminated; I was no longer a minister, but being a privy councillor I conceived I had a perfect right to intimate to her Majesty—I did it with the view of preventing embarrassment—having advised certain measures, having been prepared to propose them as a minister, I had a right to state what those measures were, and that, as a private member of parliament, I would give to them a cordial support. And what were the circumstances under which that assurance was conveyed? My hon. friend says that I prevented the formation of a conservative government—of a protection government, I mean. I did no such thing. [Mr. Bankes: What I said was, that you prevented a dissolution of parliament.] The circumstances under which I wrote that letter, which my hon. friend complains of as unconstitutional, were these—[Mr. G. Bankes—I beg pardon, I did not say unconstitutional.] Oh, then, the whole matter falls to the ground. [Mr. G. Bankes: I said it was unprecedented and dangerous as an example.] Well, that is very like unconstitutional. An hon. member, I think, told the House that he did not say "gross exaggeration," but "great exaggeration;" and now my hon. friend tells us, that he did not say "unconstitutional," but "unprecedented and dangerous." Unprecedented! and were not the circumstances unprecedented? I felt it my duty—my right hon. friends around me took the same view, and felt it their duty—to quit her Majesty's service; it was distinctly intimated to me that those of my colleagues who differed from me were not prepared to form a government themselves, nor yet to advise the formation of a government upon the principle of protection; the noble lord (Lord J. Russell) and Lord Lansdowne declined to undertake the government, until they had an assurance that others, who might be presumed to have a majority,

were not ready to undertake the government. Her Majesty sent for the noble lord opposite—the noble lord was in a minority of ninety—and it was proposed by her Majesty to him that he should undertake the formation of a government. The circumstances were unusual; but I ask any man to judge whether under such circumstances the course which I took in giving an assurance to her Majesty that the measures on the subject of the Corn-law which I was willing to propose as a minister, I would cordially support as a private member of parliament, was either justly blameable or dangerous to the state? Of course the noble lord was entitled to ask, “What are my prospects, I do not say of carrying on the government permanently, but of adjusting the Corn-law? Nothing could induce me to undertake it excepting the prospect of success; what is the support I may expect?” I anticipated any such question, by enabling her Majesty to inform the noble lord of the course I had myself taken; and as others were not prepared to form a government, I felt it my duty to intimate to her Majesty that I would cordially support the measures I had advised in office. If it is unprecedented, it is because the circumstances are unprecedented; but I see nothing in it either blameable or dangerous in the slightest degree as an example. But my hon. friend says, he did not object to it as impeding the formation of a protection government, but as preventing a dissolution; and my hon. friend and others have blamed me for not advising a dissolution of parliament. In my opinion it would have been utterly inconsistent with the duty of a minister to advise a dissolution of parliament under the particular circumstances in which this question of the Corn-law was placed. Why should it be so utterly impossible for this parliament to deal with the present proposition? After its election in 1841, this parliament passed the existing Corn-law which diminished protection; this parliament passed the tariff, destroying altogether the system of prohibition with respect to food; this parliament passed the Canada Corn-bill; why should it exceed the functions of this parliament to entertain the present proposition? But, upon much higher ground, I would not consent to a dissolution. That indeed, I think, would have been “a dangerous precedent,” for a minister to admit that the existing legislature was incompetent to the entertainment of any question; that is a precedent which I would not establish. Whatever may have been the circumstances that may have taken place at an election, I never would sanction the view that any House of Commons is incompetent to entertain a measure which is necessary for the well-being of the community. If you were to admit that doctrine, you would shake the foundations on which many of the best laws are placed. Why, that doctrine was propounded at the time of the union between England and Ireland, as it had previously been at the time of the union between England and Scotland; it was maintained in Ireland very vehemently; but it was not maintained in this country by Mr. Fox. It was slightly adverted to by Mr. Sheridan at the time when the message with regard to the union was delivered. Parliament had been elected without the slightest reason to believe it would resolve that its functions were to be fused and mixed with those of another legislature, namely, the Irish parliament; and Mr. Sheridan slightly hinted it, as an objection to the competency of parliament. Mr. Pitt met that objection, at the outset, in the following manner. Mr. Pitt said—“The first objection is, what I heard alluded to by the hon. gentleman opposite to me, when his Majesty’s message was brought down, namely, that the parliament of Ireland is incompetent to entertain and discuss the question, or rather, to act upon the measure proposed, without having previously obtained the consent of the people of Ireland, their constituents. This point, Sir, is of so much importance, that I think I ought not to suffer the opportunity to pass without illustrating more fully what I mean. If this principle of the incompetency of parliament to the decision of the measure be admitted, or if it be contended that parliament has no legitimate authority to discuss and decide upon it, you will be driven to the necessity of recognizing a principle the most dangerous that ever was adopted in any civilized state—I mean the principle that parliament cannot adopt any measure new in its nature, and of great importance, without appealing to the constituent and delegating authority for directions. If that doctrine be true, look to what an extent it will carry you. If such an argument could be set up and maintained, you acted without any legitimate authority when you created the representation of the principality of Wales, or of either of the counties palatine of England. Every law that parliament



ever made, without that appeal, either as to its own frame and constitution, as to the qualification of the electors or the elected, as to the great and fundamental point of the succession to the Crown, was a breach of treaty and an act of usurpation."

Then, Mr. Pitt asked, if they turned to Ireland herself, what would they say to the Protestant parliament that destroyed the exclusive Protestant franchise, and admitted the Roman Catholics to vote, without any fresh appeal? Mr. Pitt went on:—"What must be said by those who have at any time been friends to any plan of parliamentary reform, and particularly such as have been most recently brought forward, either in Great Britain or Ireland? Whatever may have been thought of the propriety of the measure, I never heard any doubt of the competency of parliament to consider and discuss it. Yet I defy any man to maintain the principle of those plans, without contending that, as a member of parliament, he possesses a right to concur in disfranchising those who sent him to parliament, and to select others, by whom he was not elected, in their stead. I am sure that no sufficient distinction, in point of principle, can be successfully maintained for a single moment; nor should I deem it necessary to dwell on this point in the manner that I do were I not convinced that it is connected in part with all those false and dangerous notions on the subject of government which have lately become too prevalent in the world."

Mr. Pitt contended, therefore, that parliament had a right to alter the succession to the throne, to incorporate with itself another legislature, to disfranchise its constituents, or associate others with them. Why, is it possible for a minister now to advise the Crown to dissolve parliament, on the ground that it is incompetent to entertain the question what this country shall do with the Corn-law? There could not be a more dangerous example, a more purely democratical precedent, if I may so say, than that this parliament should be dissolved on the ground of its incompetency to decide upon any question of this nature. I am open to the charge, therefore, if it be one, that I did advise her Majesty to permit this measure to be brought forward in the present parliament. Now I am not aware of any other matter of mere personal character brought forward against me; there is no one part of my personal conduct of which I am not ready to give a full explanation; if I have omitted any, it has been unintentionally, and if any hon. member has any question to put to me, I will answer it. Then I come to the question itself—Is it for the public interest—is it advisable, that, under the present circumstances of this country, in the present state of public opinion, we should now either refuse to modify the law, in order to meet the case of Irish distress, or that, having modified it, we should have a new Corn-law, or that we should try to adjust permanently this question? The hon. gentleman who spoke last says—"You might have dealt with maize and nothing else; maize is the food the Irish people require, and why not admit maize and nothing else?"

Why if you want to undermine this Corn-law effectually, it will be done by taking such a course as that—by holding out to a people suffering under severe privations that maize is food good enough for them, and that the law as to maize shall be altered, but that as to wheat, barley, and oats, you will not permit a letter of the law to be touched. If you were to venture to make such an experiment upon public opinion, you would rouse a storm of indignation against the law you attempted to maintain such as would make it impossible to maintain it. And what is it you would do with respect to maize? There is a duty of 8s. on it now. Our doctrine is, that the government cannot support the people of Ireland; that we can do nothing without earnest local exertions; we all say that those local exertions ought to be made, that the duties of charity are imperative though they cannot be legally enforced, that it is the duty of the landlords of Ireland, and of all classes possessing property, to co-operate with us in mitigating the evils of this great calamity. It is all very well for us to pay the duty upon maize or oats, paying with one hand and taking with the other, as we distribute it to the people; but what are we to say to those whom we are inciting to acts of charity? Are we to say to them, that potatoes are failing, and other food must be supplied, but that they shall pay an 8s. duty upon maize, and an 18s. upon wheat, and there shall be no relaxation of that law? Say what you will, about this Irish distress, mitigate it as much as you please—do you think it would be possible (even with the extent to which you cannot deny that it exists), to vote half a million of money from the English treasury for the support of the Irish people, and to incite Irish proprietors to acts of charity, and to the purchase of food

for the support of the famishing people; and yet—in the face of every country in Europe that is at this moment threatened with scarcity, Holland and Belgium, the Russian provinces, and within these four or five days the whole kingdom of Bavaria, and after they have adopted that which the heart of every man tells him is the natural precaution to take, namely, the removal of impediments to the free import of food—yet say, that you will make no relaxation whatever in the existing Corn-laws? I believe that would be hardly possible. The right hon. gentleman the member for the university of Dublin (Mr. Shaw) says he cannot deny that there does exist a great scarcity in Ireland. I took down his words. What said he? He said—"I cannot deny that there is a great scarcity, and also that there is great danger of disease; but these are common things in Ireland—this is the normal state of Ireland. A large portion of the Irish people," said he, "are always living on the verge of destitution. There has been no year in my recollection when the same statement as to disease might not be made."

Well, be it so; that, you will say, goes some way to nullify the argument in favour of the present proposition. But, in the face of that declaration, will you tell me that this is a labourer's question? Will you say that the maintenance of protection is for the benefit of the Irish agricultural labourer, if protection has brought him to this? In that part of the United Kingdom, which is almost exclusively agricultural, which may be said to depend on agriculture, has protection brought you to this—that, speaking of the agricultural labourers, a large portion of the Irish people are "always living on the verge of destitution?" Is it true, "that there has been no year within your recollection when the same statement might not have been made?" Well, be it as you say. Admit that this is the permanent, the usual state of Ireland—does that afford any strong argument for the maintenance of the existing Corn-laws? But you will answer, if that has been the permanent state of Ireland, why did not you introduce this measure before? Surely, however, that is no reason against our doing it now. You are so pressed by the force of the argument, that the only answer you can make is, "Why did you not do it before?" Well, no doubt we might have done it before. Perhaps we have neglected at former periods our duty; but is that any reason why we should neglect it at present? If you have a potato-fed people, and consequently many millions depending on the supply of an article of food like the potato, subject to such diminution of quantity and deterioration of quality as we have been visited with in this year—if that be the permanent state of Ireland, does it not afford a paramount reason for attempting to effect some permanent change, and not merely supplying a temporary remedy? I think to do nothing would be impossible. To modify the existing law—to propose as a permanent system such a change in the law as that proposed by the hon. member for Southampton (Mr. Mildmay)—a sliding scale for three years and then a fixed duty—such a change as that would only encourage agitation on the one hand, while by the agricultural body it would be rejected with scorn—laughed at—scouted. Such an arrangement would effect no good, produce no benefit. Then what is left? Is there any alternative but trying to lay the foundation for an ultimate adjustment, by repealing those laws? My firm conviction is, that it is for the interest of all, of the agricultural interest in particular, that this in the present state of affairs is the safest course. The hon. member for Newark asked me repeatedly whether I meant to ruin the agricultural interest? Sir, I attach the utmost importance to the prosperity of the agricultural interest. ["Oh!" and *ironical cheers from the protection benches.*] Why, I don't know for what reason I have not as much right to feel an interest in the prosperity of agriculture as any of those who received that sentiment with scorn. Why, what possible interest can I have to injure that interest? I attach the utmost importance to it. I think, for great political reasons, it is of the utmost importance that the agricultural interest should have great weight and authority in the government of this country. I think with Burke, that land is the safest basis of political power. He says, "All the writers,"—and he quotes Aristotle as speaking of the Grecian States, and Cicero as speaking of Rome—"All the writers on politics have attached the utmost importance to land, and have declared that it is the safest basis of a sound and permanent government." I concur in that opinion, and deeply should I deplore the day when the landed interest of this country should be excluded from its full share in its councils

and legislation. But Burke adds, with equal truth, that, fortunately for this country, land has directed its councils, the reason being that the landed aristocracy and the landed proprietors have never been as a class dissociated from the general interest, but subjecting themselves to the influence and the progress of public opinion, and proving their unity of interest with all. Why, that is just the question. By what means shall we secure the continuance in the just influence of the landed interest of this country? Is it by maintaining your privileges on the ground of the exclusion of food? ["No!"] Well, then, on the ground of taxation on the importation of foreign corn? I will call it by which name you wish; it is not, certainly, the "exclusion" of food. But the question is, will it more conduce to the permanent, just, and legitimate influence of the land in this country than these Corn-laws should at length be repealed, or that they should be continued in all their integrity? Now, my firm conviction—accuse me of treachery if you please—is, that you will fortify and maintain the influence of the land by this arrangement, rather than, in the present state of public feeling, by pertinaciously insisting on maintaining the present laws. Look, for example, at the tax on butter. That, at any rate, is not a tax of 400 or 500 years' standing. The taxes on butter and cheese were introduced within a few years. Why should the removal of those taxes be constructed into any assault on the privileges of the landed interest? Let us consider the bearing of this question of the Corn-laws on the great interests of this country, upon the land and the landed aristocracy, the legitimate influence of which I hope to see maintained for ever. We have to deal with a population which by the last census, that of 1841, consisted of about 19,000,000 people. [An hon. member: Twenty-seven.] I am excluding Ireland; if I were to include Ireland in my present calculation I should greatly fortify my position. In this country we have 19,000,000 of people. Now, how are they divided? You have of persons engaged in or connected with the agricultural interest about 1,500,000, not including women and children; of landed proprietors, farmers, and occupiers of land, and persons above and under twenty years of age, employed in agriculture, about 1,500,000; you have of labourers engaged in other occupations about 761,000, including all those classes who labour in mines and quarries, and so on; of persons engaged in trade and manufactures, including all the commercial and manufacturing classes, you have 3,111,000; 200,000 persons belonging to the learned professions, including educated persons following miscellaneous occupations; 611,000 persons independent or living on their fortunes; and 200,000 paupers, lunatics, and so on. Now just consider what a vast proportion of that great mass of people, 19,000,000 altogether—what a vast proportion of that mass consists of people who earn their subsistence by manual labour, and must subsist upon wages under 30s. a week? And just consider how taxation, wholly apart from the tax on food—just consider, I say, how taxation for the State presses on that class of the community. You raise about £32,000,000 of taxes by the customs and excise. Take those articles which enter into the consumption of a family, the head of which earns less than 30s. a week. I have returns here of those articles which are in weekly use by families of that class. Now, what are these articles, independent of bread? They are butter, cheese, a little meat, bacon, lard, candles, soap, and a little tobacco. Hardly any one of those articles is free from being taxed. Let us see what is the influence of taxation on that class of the community. It is inevitable, with a system of indirect taxation, that they must pay heavily; but I know, if the burden presses unjustly upon them, it is from no want of sympathy on the part of the gentlemen of England; it is, however, inevitable: we must raise a great part of our taxation by indirect taxes, and the burden will be unequally distributed. You have, and my belief is that you have established a just claim to the confidence and the gratitude of this country, relieved those classes to some extent. You did take upon yourselves the burden of raising £5,000,000 a year by means of the Income-tax, not only to supply a deficiency, but to relieve the labouring classes from some of the taxation that pressed too heavily upon them. In order that I may be perfectly accurate, I will here state, from documents which I hold in my hand, the actual consumption of a labourer, earning 10s. a week in summer, and 9s. a week in winter, he having a wife and one child. This is an actual return of the consumption of this one individual and his family. He bought four gallons of bread—but put that out of the question at present—he bought 1½lb. of cheese, some bacon, some

salt meat, some butter, some tea and sugar, some candles, and some soap. Now, with the exception of candles, the duty on which was removed very recently, all these things are taxed. By the tariff now proposed, we remove the duty from bacon and from salt meat, and we diminish the duty on butter and on cheese. Can you repent that I have made that proposition? The man died, leaving a widow and a child. The widow earned 4s. 6d. a week, and the guardians allowed her 1s. 6d. for the child; and this was her weekly expenditure—rent, 1s. 6d.; candle and soap, 4½.; butter, 2½d.; tea, 1½d.; sugar, 2d.; and with her expenditure for bread she was left with only 1s. 8d. for firing, shoes, clothes, &c., all of which it was very difficult for her to buy out of that sum of 1s. 8d. Even in that case, the soap and the candles, the butter, the tea, and the sugar, all were taxed. Now, Sir, let me take the case of a Yorkshireman, spending more money, living on better fare, and earning more wages. This, too, is a *bona fide* return of actual expenditure. This man earned 15s. or 16s. a week, out of which he spent 14s., and the expenditure was thus—meat, 2s.; sugar, 7d.; cheese 7d.; soap and candles, 3½d.; butter 8d.; tea and coffee, 1s. 6d.; and oatmeal, 7½d., making altogether 6s. 3d. What was the expenditure of that man for wheat flour? No less than 8s. a week out of 14s. Every week he had to buy three stone of flour, which, for the last few years, had ranged at 2s. 8d. a stone. Six shillings he spent upon all other necessities, but wheat constituted the great part of his expenditure—on wheat flour he was compelled to spend more than one-half of his wages. Now, supposing the abolition of the law were to cause some reduction in the price of wheat flour—just ask yourselves this—suppose it does cause some reduction, are you not most materially adding to the comfort and the enjoyment of those classes? This is by far the most important aspect under which you can view the question. I know the real sympathy you have for the condition of the working classes. I do not agree with those who throw imputations upon your humanity. I know that the gentlemen of England are more sincere in their sympathy for the suffering of the poor, and earnestly desire to better their condition. I know that that desire actuates you as much, if not more, than any other class of the community; and I ask you to consider the expenditure of a working man, which I have laid before you. You cannot increase direct taxation with any advantage—I believe you would if you could. You raise £7,000,000 by stamps, £5,000,000 by the Income-tax, and £4,000,000 by the assessed taxes. You may add to the Income-tax without at all benefiting the poor, as there are limits to this direct taxation. You may carry the tax upon capital to too great an extent, and although it falls at first upon the rich, it would end by more seriously injuring the poor than indirect taxation. Adam Smith says, “The first maxim with respect to taxation is, that every man shall contribute to the taxation of the State in proportion to the amount of property he enjoys under the protection of the State.” Now, are you able to apply that maxim to the case of the Yorkshireman whose expenditure I have given you? I much doubt whether taxation does not fall much heavier on his class than upon us. The poor cannot resort to other countries where the scale of taxation is less than here. They are fixed as it were to the soil. They are tied to the labour from which they derive their subsistence, and undoubtedly taxation falls more heavily upon them than upon us. If you increase the assessed taxes, or the stamp duties, or the income tax, it does not follow that you will benefit the labourer. Indirect taxation may be more beneficial than direct taxation; but look how many of the articles which enter into the consumption of the poor man, are heavily taxed; and then comes the question of bread, the expenditure on which consists of more than one-half of his income. When you say there will be a reduction in the price of corn, and that the danger is there will be some reduction in rent as a consequence, you certainly have no sympathy for those with whom corn constitutes the greater part of their weekly expenses. The noble lord the member for Lynn required me to state what was my calculation with respect to the future price of corn. Well, I have repeatedly declined; and I know not how it is possible for any human being to make a calculation with regard to the probable price of corn hereafter. But the noble lord said, “Well, if you will not answer that question, there is another question which you shall answer, and to which I pin you.” In 1835 the price of wheat, on the average of the year, was 39s.; and the noble lord says, “I insist upon your telling me what would have been the price at which foreign corn might have

been imported, supposing there had been no duty upon corn in the year 1835." I say to the noble lord, I am not prepared to admit that there would have been a reduction in the price of corn; I am not prepared to admit, as a necessary consequence, that if there had been established for some time previously a free trade in corn, there necessarily would have been in the year 1835 a lower price than 39s. That is my answer, which the noble lord thinks a monstrous one, because the noble lord has got a list of some few cargoes of corn bought at Dantzic and other places, and brought into this country at a profit for less than 39s. [Lord G. Bentinck: They were returns which I read.] I do not doubt the accuracy of the return, but I say it is completely beside the question. It is no sort of proof whatever, because in 1835 some cargoes of corn were brought here, having cost at Dantzic 20s., that if you had established a permanently free trade in corn, the price of wheat in this country would necessarily have been below 39s. I will give the noble lord my reason for maintaining my proposition in opposition to his. I say there is no arguing from the price of corn upon the continent in any given year, when the market of this country was not fully and fairly open to importation; and as the noble lord says he relies upon parliamentary returns, I also will rely upon parliamentary returns. You sent Mr. Jacob, a man of great knowledge and great experience with respect to the Corn-law, in 1827, to the continent, to report upon the state of foreign corn, and you find in Mr. Jacob's report this principle laid down. He says:—"In consequence of your excluding foreign corn by your high duties, there has been an accumulation of corn in many foreign markets."

He then says—"It is this accumulation which depresses the agricultural interest, by the exaggerated representation of its amount when we have an abundant harvest, and by the too rapid influx whenever the harvests are deficient."

I cannot think that in the years 1822 and 1823 wheat could have sunk so low as 38s. per quarter, if the ports had been open to foreign grain, and the surplus of continental Europe had been sent to this country as it was required. "The penning up of wheat (continues Mr. Jacob) in countries of small extent, soon creates a glut in such countries, although the quantity really accumulated there may be very minute, and such as, if distributed here, would produce no sensible decline in price. A few thousand quarters of wheat, for instance, in Holstein, Mecklenburgh, or Denmark, for which there was no foreign market, would reduce the price even below the half; the seller must take what is offered, and the reluctant buyer will offer a very low rate. A small sale fixes the price in such cases."

And that is the true state of the case. I apprehend that if you encourage production abroad by the hope of an extravagant price, and a good harvest causes a great accumulation on the continent, then you will have wheat at a very low price; the needy seller will sell, and the cunning buyer will buy, and there will be profit though the price be very low; and the noble lord argues that this exception is the universal rule, and that under a free trade the price of corn will necessarily fall. I differ from the noble lord, and that is my reason for saying that I am not prepared to admit that if you open the ports, and have a regular dealing in corn with foreign markets, it will necessarily follow that the price of corn will be below 39s. As the noble lord has referred to returns, I may also refer to them. The consuls in the different corn-producing countries were required to state what quantity of corn, of each kind, could be exported to England from the country in which they resided, if the trade in corn was made constantly free at a moderate duty. What is the answer of the consuls? The general average of price 40s. 6d., free on board. The general average of freight 4s. 9½d. The average, free on board, of wheat, from St. Petersburg, was calculated, by the British consul, to be 39s. 1d.; freight from 4s. 6d. to 5s. At Dantzic, the price of wheat, in all ordinary years, the ports of England being open, was calculated at 40s., and the price of freight from 3s. 6d. to 4s. I am not including now the prices of landing and shipment in this country. I am only speaking of the average price of wheat and the average freight. The price at Stettin was calculated at 40s., freight from 4s. to 5s.; at Hamburgh, 35s. to 46s., freight from 2s. 5d. to 5s. 6d. Relying, then, upon the opinion of Mr. Jacob, that if you obstruct the trade in corn there will be occasional accumulations and very depressed prices, and that you will have the means of bringing it into the market on account of the accumulation at a low rate, and relying also upon the returns of your

own consuls as to what would be the probable cost of wheat in this country, free on board, and the probable freight, provided there was free admission—relying upon these two parliamentary returns, the argument of Mr. Jacob, and the facts furnished by the consuls, I again repeat that I am not prepared to admit that, with a free trade in corn, the price of wheat would be reduced below the 39s. 5d. which it bore in the year 1835. What was the fact? In the year 1822, of which Mr. Jacob speaks, and in the year 1835, you had no foreign import whatever; you had completely excluded foreign corn: it was not foreign competition that depressed your prices; but with full protection you had in 1822 a price of 38s. and in 1835 a price of 39s. There is no pretence for saying that the price of foreign wheat had depressed prices here. In 1822 you moved for a committee on agricultural distress. It was stated that the agricultural interest was suffering so severely that it was necessary to inquire what remedies could be applied; and therefore, observe, the complete exclusion of foreign corn does not ensure you either from depression in price, or from severe agricultural distress requiring the appointment of a parliamentary committee. Then, in 1835, the other year to which the noble lord referred, you had no foreign competition; you had a price of 39s. 1d.; but the depression of price was entirely caused by the abundance of your own harvest. In 1836, following the example of 1822—it being impossible to allege that foreign corn had, in either case, depressed your price or caused your distress—in 1836, as in 1822, a parliamentary committee was appointed, for the purpose of considering what remedy could be applied to agricultural distress. I have been attempting to show, looking at the population, looking at the bearings of taxation, what immense masses of people depend for the subsistence of their families upon their weekly earnings—taking those weekly earnings at less than 30s.—what enormous masses there are in this country who so earn their subsistence, and to whom the price of wheat is of the utmost importance in their domestic economy. I have shown you that it constitutes more than one-half of the expenditure in those cases where wheat is consumed; and I ask you, could you do anything more to benefit the social condition of that class than give them an assurance that they shall have wheat at a moderate price in this country? There might be a great depression in price; but if free trade in corn gives you a guarantee against such low prices as you have had under protection, a guarantee against such high prices as you have also had under protection would be of inestimable advantage to the working classes. Suppose the price of corn were not depressed below 50s. or below 54s., or any other sum that you can name—if you take a guarantee, by extending the sources and ranges of your supply, that it should not rise to 70s. or 80s., by that act alone you would be conferring an inestimable advantage on the working classes of this country. Surely, no hon. gentleman can now share in the alarm that, by widening the sources of supply, we shall establish a dependence on foreign countries, because he has shown you that the more you extended the area from which you drew cotton and indigo, the more you reduced the price and equalised the supply. We are about to admit maize and many other articles of subsistence besides wheat. Suppose wheat should fail. If you suppose that foreign countries would enter into a combination not to give us their wheat, still, by the law which we propose, we should have maize to rely upon, rice to rely upon; and I confess, if the two tariffs shall pass and receive the sanction of the legislature, I think it impossible for any one to entertain an apprehension that, by any combination of foreign nations, we shall be in danger of being exposed to an enormous rise in the price of corn. Taking the whole of these measures together, I do not apprehend the existence of any scarcity from a reliance upon an increase of the foreign supply of corn. I have hitherto been referring to the manufacturing classes; and I think gentlemen cannot deny that those who are connected with commerce and manufactures, and who earn their subsistence by their daily labour—I think it cannot be denied that they have a direct and immediate interest in a moderate price of wheat. But it may justly be said, that to their interests the interests of the agricultural classes ought not to be sacrificed. I admit it—I admit it. I think the position of the farmer, the position of the agricultural labourer, ought to be a subject of equal concern, at least, with that of any other class in the country; and if we could, with truth, say that under a system of protection we had been able to exhibit a prosperous and contented class of agricultural labourers throughout the

country, then I should be disposed to acknowledge that you had made out some valid objection to the proposed change. But can we say, with truth, that throughout this country the position of the agricultural labourer has been such as I have described? [Colonel Sibthorp: Yes.] The gallant colonel says, "yes." I say, no. And I will now deal with that position—that the rate of wages of the agricultural labourer varies with the price of food. In manufacturing districts, I again say, it is my firm impression that his wages are more likely to vary inversely to the price of food, than directly. I am prepared to contend, and I think to prove, that there is no direct connection between the wages of the agricultural labourer and the price of wheat. [A member: Yes.] If there is, then, how do you account to me for this? If the wages of the agricultural labourer vary directly with the price of wheat, why is it that wages are 8s. in Wiltshire, and 13s. in Lincolnshire? Take an agricultural county. I admit that in Lincolnshire wages are about 13s. In Kent, too, for some reason or other, wages are high—they are not generally less than 13s. But take the case of those labourers who are most removed from the influence of manufactures. Take Somersetshire, Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, Cornwall—take Devonshire too. In the first place, I say, that as you advance from purely agricultural districts to manufacturing districts, you find the wages of the agricultural labourer increased. But how direct is the sympathy between manufacturing prosperity and agricultural? The fact which you admit is, that in Somersetshire, Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, Devonshire, and those counties of England which are depending upon agriculture, wages are low; and in proportion as you advance to Northamptonshire and the midland counties, and on to Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Yorkshire, and Lancashire, you find the wages of the purely agricultural labourer increase as you approach the manufacturing towns. Is not this a very strong proof that the prosperity of manufactures increases the demand for agricultural produce? But see the position of the agricultural labourer, and see the lesson which we ought to derive from the gradual increase of his wages. Take a purely agricultural county—Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, or other counties in the south-west of England. If there is any direct connection between the rate of wages and the price of wheat, why are wages in those counties at the existing rate, and why are they 13s. or 14s. in the midland counties? Because great skill and industry are employed in the latter districts. That is just what I want to prove. I am trying to show that a country naturally not fertile may be brought into fertility by the use of manure and the application of skill and capital, and that the effect of these is the same as that produced by the approach to a manufacturing town—to raise the wages of the agricultural labourer. I am trying to show that there are two causes of a high rate of wages for the agricultural labourer—the application of skill and capital—as, much to the credit of the agriculturists of Lincolnshire, those means are employed in Lincolnshire—or the approach to a manufacturing town. [Colonel Sibthorp: They get a remunerating price for their corn.] A remunerating price for their corn! There is as remunerating a price in Wiltshire and Devonshire as in Lincolnshire. In those counties the farmer has equally the protecting duty of 18s.; at present that does not vary, but the rate of wages does. The gallant colonel must see, without much stress upon his logical faculties, that there is some other cause for the variation of the wages of the agricultural labourer. Well, but how can we say that, with protection, the position of the agricultural labourer, in a purely agricultural county, is one which we approve of? You know you cannot. Do you not admit to me that in the social condition of the millions in the manufacturing districts, who earn their subsistence by the sweat of their brow, the price of wheat is of the first importance, and has become an object of the deepest interest? Have you read the reports on the health of towns? Are you not deeply convinced that some effort ought to be made to improve the social condition of the masses of the population, who earn their subsistence in the manufacturing towns? It seems to me that the first foundation of any such improvement is, that there should be abundance of food. You may talk of improving the habits of the working classes, introducing education amongst them, purifying their dwellings, improving their cottages; but believe me the first step towards improvement of their social condition is an abundance of food. That lies at the bottom of all. It is in vain, if the people are suffering under scarcity, or if any apprehension of scarcity prevails; the suffering, or the apprehension of it, so depresses the spirits,

that it is vain for you to inculcate lessons of cleanliness, or to improve dwellings, until the people are provided with abundance of food. The experience of the last three years, and the experience of the three preceding years, has taught us a lesson which we ought never to forget, as to the effects upon the social condition, the moral habits, and the happiness of the working classes, of an abundance of food. Is it possible to resist this conclusion from the observations that have been made? In a purely agricultural district, is it possible to say the rate of wages of the agricultural labourer has any direct connection with the ratio of the price of wheat?—[An hon. member : Yes!] Well, now, I will demonstrate that it has not. Observe, I do not mean to say that there may not be some increase in wages when prices rise. I do not mean to say that when wheat is very high, there is not an occasional increase of wages; but I think I can demonstrate that the rate of wages does not bear any proportion to the increase of price of food. I have here a return, and I will quote no figures which I am not prepared to communicate to any gentleman connected with the counties to which they refer. They are the best test of the condition of the labourer, and communicate information which may be relied upon. I will take the variations in the price of wheat from the year 1837 down. I requested to have an account made up from the wages actually paid to agricultural labourers on particular farms from 1837 to 1844 inclusive. I begin, then, with the wages of agricultural labourers for eight years, from 1837 to 1844 inclusive, in the Sodbury Union, in the county of Gloucester. The labourer received money as well as beer. Here, then, is an account of the wages for the summer and winter weeks. Since 1837, the price of corn has varied very much. Why, in the present year it has varied from 45s. 1d. to 58s. 8d. I will read the price of wheat since 1837 :—

|                       |           |            |          |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| In 1837 the price was | 53s. 10d. | 1841 ..... | 64s. 4d. |
| 1838 .....            | 64s. 7d.  | 1842 ..... | 57s. 3d. |
| 1839 .....            | 70s. 8d.  | 1843 ..... | 50s. 1d. |
| 1840 .....            | 66s. 4d.  | 1844 ..... | 51s. 2d. |

Therefore, the price of wheat had varied from 70s. 8d. to 50s. 1d. within this period of eight years. Now, I dare say you will say, as writers upon political economy have already said, that the ultimate tendency of wages is to accommodate itself to the price of food. I must say that I do not believe it. But I should like to know what consolation it would be to the poor agricultural labourer to be told that the increase in the price of corn would have a tendency to increase his wages in perhaps a period of ten years? What consolation is it to tell him in 1839, that although he paid 70s. 8d. a quarter for his corn, he might be able to purchase it in 1843 for 50s. 1d., when it was likely there would be a close approximation in the amount of his wages within that year? But I do not believe that there is that tendency. I tell you, now, what I think is more natural, namely, a tendency rather to substitute potatoes for wheat among the people of this country. I do not mention this fact with a view of using any acrimonious language in reply to acrimonious observations. I am dealing with matters of the deepest import. The allotment system has been much extolled; the adoption of which has been very extensively recommended from, I admit, the most benevolent motives. Taking individual cases, the possession of small allotments is no doubt of very great advantage to the labourers. I believe that every one admits that within certain limits the greatest advantage would be conferred upon the poorer classes, by the adoption of this system. That it would give them great comfort, independent of the physical advantage that they would derive from it. It would also give him an interest in the soil, a healthful occupation, and by making him a landed proprietor, it would give him great social advantages. But after all, what is the tendency of such a system, if extensively carried out? Is it not to create a kind of Irish peasantry, by the substitution for their food of potatoes for wheat? You will find that this would be the case—that potatoes would be substituted for wheaten bread. According, then, as this system increases, you will be also increasing the dangers probably of such calamities as the people of Ireland are now suffering under, although, no doubt, in a much more mitigated state. Now I should think it would be a very great calamity indeed if we were to see potatoes used here instead of wheat. I believe that the higher the kind of food is which we introduce among the labourers, the security will be the greater for their permanent happiness and



contentment. What is the fact? Just in proportion to the depressed condition of the labourers, is there a tendency amongst them to substitute potatoes for wheat. The labourer who has no allotment must depend for his subsistence upon wheat almost exclusively, and, therefore, the greatest proportion of his earnings goes for the purchase of wheat. The possession of an allotment has a tendency, no doubt, to improve immediately the condition of the labourer; but I am only speaking of the danger of carrying this system out to a very great extent, by inducing the substitution of potatoes for wheat. I have read the variations of the price of corn for several years. I will now refer to the variations in the price of labour. I do not mean that these quotations are the total amount of wages, because in harvest time there are always some additional allowances made; but these allowances are made in every year, so that we may strike these additions altogether out of our consideration. In the union to which I have referred, the price of wages averaged in summer 9s. a week, and 1s. for beer. The total average per week, including beer, for winter and summer, was—

|               |                |            |                |
|---------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| In 1837 ..... | 10s. per week. | 1841 ..... | 11s. per week. |
| 1838 .....    | 11s. "         | 1842 ..... | 11s. "         |
| 1839 .....    | 11s. "         | 1843 ..... | 10s. "         |
| 1840 .....    | 11s. "         | 1844 ..... | 10s. "         |

So that while the price of wheat varied from 50s. 1d. to 70s. 8d., the price of wages in the same union, within a like period, varied only from 10s. to 11s. a week. From Blandford, in Dorsetshire, we had this reply:—"The statement on the other side was given me by four different yeomen. It is only the first-rate labourer that gets 9s. in these parts, unless at piece-work or extra times, and then if the extra hours were reckoned up which the men work at piece-work, I do not think it would average more than 8s. to 9s. with the best men."

Now, at that place the average wages were:—

|               |               |            |               |
|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| In 1837 ..... | 7s. per week. | 1841 ..... | 8s. per week. |
| 1838 .....    | 8s. "         | 1842 ..... | 8s. "         |
| 1839 .....    | 8s. "         | 1843 ..... | 8s. "         |
| 1840 .....    | 8s. "         | 1844 ..... | 8s. "         |

Therefore, whilst the price of corn had varied from 70s. 8d. to 51s. 1d., it was 48s. 6d. in 1836; wages have only varied from 7s. to 8s. a week. There were extra earnings, such as piece-work, harvesting, &c., as I am aware; but those, for the reason I have given, I do not reckon; they might probably amount to 1s. more each week. That is the statement of one of these yeomen near Blandford. Another farmer states that wages in 1837 were 7s.; in 1838, 7s.; 1839, 8s.; 1840, 8s.; 1841, 8s.; 1842, 8s.; 1843, 8s.; 1844, 8s.—a variation of only 1s. in the rate of wages, notwithstanding the great variation in the price of wheat during the same period. I will take the rate of wages again, in Cornwall: from the Union of Bodmin a person writes—"In reply to your letter of the 8th instant, I beg to state that the rate of wages in this union has not varied from 1837 to 1844. Labourers have been in the habit of receiving 8s. or 9s. per week during the whole of this period. Those who have had 9s. per week, have been supplied with wheat by their employers at 8s. per imperial bushel, and barley at 4s.; whilst those who have received 8s. per week have had to pay 6s. 8d. for wheat, and 3s. 4d. for barley, whatever may have been the price of grain."

Then, from Barnstaple, there is this communication.—"I have inquired of several farmers residing in various parts of this union the amount of agricultural wages during the years 1837 to 1844 inclusive, and have ascertained that, in general, the sum paid was 8s. a week; some few farmers gave 9s.; but a much greater number only 7s. No rise or fall appears to have taken place during the eight years in question, except that in very dear seasons some employers supplied their labourers with corn at a reduced price; but I am inclined to think that they were not very numerous."

I will now take East and West Suffolk; and first, East Suffolk:—"The variation of wages in this neighbourhood has been from 8s. to 10s. a week from 1835 up to the present time; and within that period the price of flour has varied from 1s. 3d. to 2s. 10d. the stone of 14 lbs."

That is to say, the wages increased one-fifth, while the price of flour had more than doubled. The communication proceeded—"The supply of labour is greater than the demand in this neighbourhood, and the price of labour is, in fact, what the farmer chooses to give; but he invariably raises his wages and lowers them with the price of corn, though never in the same proportions. Consequently the poor are better off with low than with high prices. You will at once see that 8s. a week, with flour at 1s. 3d., is better than 10s. a week with flour at 2s. 10d., supposing the man's family to require from two to three stone of flour weekly."

Now, that is the state of things in East Suffolk. Next I will give you West Suffolk. The writer says—"The general wages paid by the farmers of this parish have fluctuated from 9s. to 10s. per week; but the men employed at task work, such as thrashing, &c., have earned from 1s. to 2s. per week in addition. The variation in the rate of wages has certainly been caused by the fluctuations in the price of corn; but when wheat was selling at 20s. per coomb,—[a coomb is half an imperial quarter]—I do not remember that wages were below 9s. per week; and when the farmers were realizing 35s. per coomb, 10s. per week was generally the amount of wages given. The result of my experience is, therefore, to show that although wages fluctuate, in trifling degree, with the price of corn, they do not rise or fall in proportion to such price, and, therefore, that the labourers are beat off when the prices are low."

There are occasionally extraordinary additions made to the labourer's earnings, and in harvest time his earnings are always increased; but these additions apply to all years alike, and therefore I have not reckoned them. Have I not then proved that it is impossible to gainsay that the present generation—the existing race of labourers—cannot be benefited in any way by the slow adjustment between the price of food and the rate of wages? Again, I say, I doubt the position that ultimately even there is any tendency between the two to approximate. But if I have shown that in these eight years—a long period in a labouring man's life—no rise at all in wages has taken place proportionate to the rise in the price of corn, I think I have shown so far that the rate of wages has no such connection with the prices of food as to rise with them, but rather directly the reverse. I think I have succeeded in demonstrating that the rise in price of wheat operates almost immediately in favour of the agricultural interest. I put this to you in perfect good faith and sincerity. Do you think that you can maintain this system of protection much longer? and, above all things, are you not assured that we cannot maintain the existing law upon the ground of its being advantageous to agriculture? Adam Smith, whose name has been so often mentioned in the course of these discussions, tells his readers, and probably to the satisfaction of every impartial and intelligent man, that the rate of wages depends upon the country being in a prosperous condition. When there is abundance of capital, large profits, an active and healthy condition of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, then will the rate of wages be high; and when the opposite state of things happens to prevail, then will the rate of wages be in a depressed state, and the working classes reduced to comparative poverty. General prosperity, and not legal enactments, produce a practical effect upon the rates of wages. It is by removing restrictions on manufactures and commerce that you create a demand for labour, and not by raising the price of food. Make the sustenance of mankind difficult of attainment, and you take a guarantee against the rise of wages. But remove restrictions upon agriculture, manufactures, and commerce—pass this measure—and then you at least save yourselves from the necessity and the odium of constant interference for the purpose of regulating the supply of food. And what is it that you relinquish? Well, I could prove to you, by returns from different parts of the country, not such as my right hon. friend read to you, showing to you the extent of disease and distress, that there has been at least no panic in the price of food. I can adduce instances to you which would demonstrate this—I can point to eleven farms in Roxburgh that have become vacant since this measure was proposed, and in every one of these cases there has been an increase of rent—I can prove to you that enormous prices have been given for land in Scotland, and that where there is great capital and skill, there is no apprehension entertained as to the consequences of this measure. Even in Lincolnshire I can show you that

farms have been let at an increased rent. I might, too, take the different counties, and show you that where there is the most agricultural skill there is the least alarm felt, and there is the greater tendency to take farms at an increased rent. Would you then, I ask, have a law maintained for bad farming and insufficient capital—that for them protection should be permanent; whereas for good farming and competent skill protection should not be required? I ask you, could such a law be justified? It is my firm belief that no general injury would follow from this measure. There may be, of course, individual cases of suffering. There will, and there must be, the suffering of property which is encumbered with tenants having insufficient capital. There may be these individual cases; but it would be most unfair from these to draw an inference against a general law. But, admitting these few cases, let us compare the advantages which you will have in the security against ruinously high prices for food; and there will be to you the advantage and the comfort that you will not be responsible for that high price in times of scarcity of food—that these afflictions will be the results of the operations of nature and not of human laws. Leave trade free, and you will not be held responsible for untoward events over which we have not, and of necessity cannot, exercise any control. Looking, then, at the compensation which this measure furnishes; I do not mean compensation in the way of small equivalents, but, on the contrary, I refer to the security and the permanency of the law—looking to the advantages which the change now proposed must confer upon the labourer—looking to the benefits it will confer upon yourselves; I mean not merely the more obvious advantages likely to arise to your estates, but the less evident effects on the improvement of your position—seeing that you will be elevated by making this concession—I think I am not acting as the enemy of that interest, with which my own is so intimately connected, when I recommend this bill to the acceptance of the House. I repeat, that that which I advise is for the true interests of every class. I ask you, do you feel secure? and if you foresee that the present system cannot long be maintained, why will you not take advantage of a favourable time for effecting a change that very soon must come? You say that the present time is one of prosperity. Is not that a most powerful reason for making this concession? At the present moment you are free agents. An hon. member said, that there was nothing to apprehend this year, nor anything next year. Then you will not go the length of saying that you are safe for more than two years. Can there be a better proof that the present is not an unfavourable moment for effecting the alteration which this measure is intended to accomplish? Again I ask you how long do you think you can maintain the system of protection? I know, and we all know, that it cannot be made permanent consistently with that degree of good-will and harmony without which a nation cannot be happy or prosperous. No doubt the immediate cause of this measure is the sad calamity which has befallen Ireland. It has forced upon you the consideration of the corn question. But suppose that you suspended the Corn-laws, what could you have done when the time of suspension was at an end? I have not overlooked the circumstance that, respecting this bill it has been said to be a good political measure on my part. The letter of the noble lord, the member for London, has been described as a good political manoeuvre on his part. Now, I ask what possible advantage can a bill like this confer upon me as an individual? I know that I have been taunted, and have more than once been told, that my days as a minister are numbered. But I have introduced this measure, not for the purpose of prolonging my ministerial existence, but for the purpose of averting a great national calamity, and for the purpose of sustaining a great public interest. I am quite aware of the fact that more than once I have been asked how long I can reckon upon the support of those hon. gentlemen opposite, without whose votes I could not hope to carry this bill through the House—how long, in fact, I can reckon upon enjoying their support with respect to other subjects? I know, as well as those who taunt me, that I have not any right to the support or confidence of those hon. members. I acknowledge, and I admit that acknowledgment with perfect sincerity and plainness, that they have supported me in passing this measure, if it will pass into a law. I do not say this as a private man—I do not on private grounds attach importance to it; but I feel and acknowledge every proper obligation to them as a public man, for the support which they have given to this measure, and for studiously avoiding everything calculated to create embarrassment to its progress; but then our differences remain

the same. I have, Sir, no right to claim their support nor their protection, nor, I will fairly admit, shall I seek it, by departing in the slightest degree from that course which my public duty may urge me to adopt. If this measure pass, our temporary connection is at an end; but I have not the slightest right to expect support or forbearance from them; still less have I, after the declarations that have been made, a right to expect forbearance or support from this side of the House. Well then, that being the case, it being the fact that there are but 112 members to support me, then I may be asked what great measure of national policy I can expect to pursue with these 112 members, constituting as they do but little more than one-sixth of the House of Commons? I am not, I say, surprised to hear hon. members predict that my tenure of power is short. But let us pass this measure, and while it is in progress let me request of you to suspend your indignation. This measure being once passed, you on this side and on that side of the House may adopt whatever measures you think proper for the purpose of terminating my political existence. I assure you I deplore the loss of your confidence much more than I shall deplore the loss of political power. The accusations which you prefer against me are on this account harmless, because I feel that they are unjust. Every man has within his own bosom and conscience the scales which determine the real weight of reproach; and if I had acted from any corrupt or unworthy motives, one-tenth part of the accusations you have levelled against me would have been fatal to my peace and my existence. You may think that we took too great precautions against Irish famine in the month of November. You are mistaken. Events will prove that those precautions were not superfluous; but even if they had been, as our motive was to rescue a whole people from the calamity of possible famine, and consequent disease, I should be easy under the accusation. I do not say whether this measure will be effectual for that or not. I speak only of the motive. What weight would your accusation have, then, even if the precautions be superfluous? I, with the information we had, and the prospects which were before us, repeat the accusation that we took superfluous precautions; and I will reply, as Mr. Burke did, when labouring under similar obloquy, and in circumstances not dissimilar:—"In every accident in life, in pain, in sickness, in depression, in distress, I called to mind that accusation; and was comforted." No, never!—no reproach will attach to me even if it be proved that our precautions were superfluous. Before the month of July—[Opposition: May]—it will be established to the conviction of every man, that the precautions we took were not superfluous, and that our motives were not impure. I am not speaking of a temporary measure; I am speaking of a permanent measure. When I do fall, I shall have the satisfaction of reflecting that I do not fall because I have shown subservience to a party. I shall not fall because I preferred the interests of party to the general interests of the community; and I shall carry with me the satisfaction of reflecting, that during the course of my official career, my object has been to mitigate monopoly, to increase the demand for industry, to remove restrictions upon commerce, to equalize the burden of taxation, and to ameliorate the condition of those who labour.

Bill read a second time, and ordered to be committed.

## VICTORY OF ALIWAL.

APRIL 2, 1846.

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows: I am enabled, I will not say through the courtesy, but the public spirit and generous feeling of many members who had motions entitled to precedence over mine, to bring forward that of which I gave notice immediately on the receipt of the intelligence of our recent successes in India. That motion, interposed as it is between discussions of great political importance, leading to much eager and even angry controversy, and to serious differences of opinion, will, I know from past experience, obtain the hearty and unanimous concurrence of this House. That motion will unite the representatives of a great empire, proud of its military glory, in acknowledging in the first place the protecting hand of Almighty God the giver of all victory, and in then expressing their exultation that new examples of heroism have maintained and exalted the military character of their country. That motion will enable us to pay a tribute of cordial and grateful

acknowledgment to the generals, to the officers, and to the men, who have achieved signal victories in a far distant land. It will enable us also to mingle with the admiration of valour the expression of a manly but heartfelt sorrow for the loss of the "unreturning brave," who have sacrificed, willingly sacrificed, their lives, in the defence of their country's interests, and in the maintenance of their country's honour. The resolutions I shall propose will convey the thanks of this House, for splendid victories achieved within a very limited period, and within a very limited space; but I have felt it my duty not to incorporate our acknowledgments for these triumphs in a single resolution, but to reserve to each triumph the separate recognition so justly due to it. It will have been my good fortune since the month of February, 1843, on five distinct occasions, to propose that the thanks of the commons of England should be conveyed to the armies, European and native, engaged in the service of the Crown in India. Including, indeed, the vote on the glorious termination of the Chinese war, on six different occasions, will the thanks of this House have been awarded. The repetition of these votes tends in no degree to dim or disparage their value. National gratitude must keep pace with national glory; and every fresh achievement adds new value to the reward we confer on skill and valour by the public acknowledgment of our gratitude. I intend, therefore, to submit two separate motions: one, acknowledging the distinguished services of Sir Henry Smith, and of the division of the army under his command, for the battle of Aliwal; and the other, conveying an equal acknowledgment for the glorious services of the army under the immediate command of Sir Hugh Gough. Since the termination of those battles, which have already entitled the Indian army to the thanks of parliament, (the battles of Moodkee and Ferozeshah,) the enemy with whom we had to contend has displayed, through a series of operations, great military skill, and that character for undaunted bravery for which they are justly distinguished. Notwithstanding the reverses they met with on the 18th and 21st of December, they appeared without delay on the banks of the Sutlej in considerable force, protected by a powerful artillery, near the ford of Hurekee. They established on the right bank of the river a large army, retaining possession of a bridge, over which they passed from the north bank of the Sutlej to the south; they established also a *tête de pont* on the left bank, and entrenched on that bank a force which by constant accessions at last included not less than 35,000 men, supported by about seventy pieces of cannon. The artillery was of beautiful workmanship, and of heavy calibre. Not only did the enemy establish that large army and plant that artillery in the face of the British troops under Sir Hugh Gough, but they despatched a force of not fewer than 20,000 men, conducted with the utmost skill and courage, towards the city of Loodiana, from which our forces had been at first withdrawn in order to assist in the battles of Moodkee and Ferozeshah. They adopted this operation, not merely for the purpose of occupying the city of Loodiana, but for the purpose of threatening to interrupt our communication with Delhi, and to intercept the arrival of our artillery by the road of Bussean. It was in order to prevent the success of this skilful and dangerous enterprise, that Sir Henry Smith was detached by Sir Hugh Gough and Sir Henry Hardinge—greatly weakening the force retained in front of the main body of the Sikh army. It was necessary, however, to do this, in order to defeat the formidable body which crossed the river from Philloor in order to intercept our communication, and if possible to transfer the seat of war from the neighbourhood of Ferozepore to Loodiana. It was intended, before Sir Henry Smith attacked the army under the Sikh chief, composed of not less than 24,000 men, supported by about sixty pieces of artillery, that he should effect a junction with the British troops at Loodiana under Major Goldby, and with another body of men sent to reinforce him under Colonel Wheeler. The House is aware that the junction was ultimately effected; and that Sir Henry Smith was strengthened by the addition of the force from Loodiana, and of that under Colonel Wheeler. A desperate action was afterwards fought by the division under Sir Henry Smith, the result of which was the utter discomfiture of the enemy, the capture of all his guns, the disorganization of his whole army, and the flight of that army across the Sutlej, after the severest loss. These operations are described with such precision—are detailed with such fulness and beautiful clearness—and must be so familiar to all whom I address, that I will not weaken the effect of their perusal by attempting to go over the same ground.

The hand that held the pen, used it with the same success with which it had wielded the sword. I have yet adverted only to the successes of Sir Henry Smith; now I will speak, and speak with confidence, and speak to his honour, of interruptions and checks to that success. There cannot but be vicissitudes in the operations of war; and that man is to be honoured, who recovers from temporary difficulties and disappointments, and thus adds brightness to the glory of his achievements. I wish, therefore, for the purpose of exalting the merits and services of Sir Henry Smith, to present to the House some occurrences that preceded the battle in which he was so eminently successful—I wish to present, from reports only recently received, an account of the difficulties and disappointments he encountered with the same spirit and constancy which he displayed in victory; and which, in my opinion, entitle him to equal applause. The great battle of Aliwal was fought on the 28th of January; but earlier in that month Sir Henry Smith had sustained what some might have considered a reverse. I allude to a period before his junction with Colonel Wheeler, and with the five regiments from Loodiana. In the absence of all intelligence he encountered the enemy; and but for his eminent skill and resolute valour, might have been exposed to serious hazard. Let me state in what manner he extricated himself. Writing to Sir Hugh Gough on the 21st, just after he had succeeded in relieving Loodiana, he said that he had accomplished that object, but under circumstances not quite so fortunate as he desired; and he used these expressions:—"When within a mile and a half to my left of Buddowal, moving parallel with my column (which was right in front ready to wheel into line), and evidently for the purpose of interrupting my advance, I saw the enemy. Nothing could be stronger for the enemy than the continued line of villages which were in his front. He was moving by roads, while I was moving over very heavy sandbeds. He was in advance far beyond, on my right flank; so far did he extend, and so numerous did he show his infantry and guns, and so well chosen for him was the line of villages, that with my force he was not to be assailed; and he opened a furious cannonade of from thirty-five to forty guns of very large calibre, and, as usual, right well served. My object being to unite myself with the force from Loodiana, which every moment I expected to appear in sight—for it was nine o'clock—I moved parallel with the enemy, resolving to attack the moment the Loodiana troops reached me. He, however, so pressed upon me, that I opened in one body my eleven guns upon him with considerable effect, and moved up the 31st, and was preparing to form line upon this regiment, when the enemy most rapidly formed a line of seven regiments, with their guns between, at right angles with the line I was about to attack, while a considerable force was moving round my right and front. Thus enveloped, and overwhelmed by numbers, and such a superiority of guns, I had nothing for it but to throw back my line on its right, which represented a small line on the hypothenuse of a triangle."

That is to say, the two divisions of the enemy formed two sides of a triangle, Sir Henry Smith and his force being placed between them on a shorter line, and nearer the centre than the remaining side of the triangle. He goes on as follows:—"The enemy thus outflanked me and my whole force. I therefore gradually withdrew my infantry in echelon of battalions, the cavalry in echelon of squadrons, in the direction of Loodiana, momentarily expecting to see the approach of that force—viz., one regiment of cavalry, five guns, and four regiments of infantry, when I would have made a vigorous attack. The ground was very deep and sandy, and therefore very difficult to move on. The enemy continued to move on as described for upwards of an hour, and until I knew the Loodiana force was moving not a musket was fired. Nothing could exceed the steadiness of the troops. The line was thrown back, under this cannonade, as if on parade, native as well as British, and the movements of the cavalry, under Brigadier Cureton, were, without any exception, the most perfect thing I ever saw, and which I cannot describe."

So far from withholding this narrative of his extrication from his difficulties, I think it only adds to the proofs of his skill and valour, and illustrates his high character as a commander. Having been disappointed in effecting his junction with the troops from Loodiana, and those expected to arrive under Colonel Wheeler, he extricated himself from his formidable embarrassment with consummate coolness and judgment. Instead of desponding under his temporary disappointment, he was able to direct all his energies to the entire discomfiture of the enemy only a few days

afterwards. Of the battle itself I will not speak; the victory was complete, and it has been so admirably described by the illustrious commander, that I will not weaken the effect of his narrative. And is this victory his only title to our acknowledgment? What have been the services of this gallant officer? These recent events have given new lustre to his preceding career. It is one of unusual distinction. Sir Henry Smith was at the capture of Monte Video—at the attack upon Buenos Ayres; he served during the first campaigns of the Peninsular war, from the battle of Vimeira to that of Corunna. He was at the battles of Sabagal and Fuentes d'Onor, at the sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos, at the battles of Salamanca, Vittoria, Orthes, the Pyrenees, and Toulouse. He was at Washington and at New Orleans, and finally he was at Waterloo. What a series of noble services—and how rejoiced I am that there should be an opportunity, through this new and signal victory, of bringing before the gladdened eyes of a grateful country a long life of military exertion, and an unbroken series of military honours! After he had achieved that success for which we are about to give him our special thanks—after he had driven back the enemy across the Sutlej, he instantly returned to rejoin his commanding-officer, Sir Hugh Gough. He arrived at head-quarters on the 8th February, two days before the decisive victory gained by the forces under Sir Hugh Gough and Sir Henry Hardinge. He took, therefore, a distinguished part in the battle of Sobraon. But for his services in the victory of the 28th of January, I propose that there should be a distinct and separate vote—distinct and separate from that which I shall recommend for that not more glorious, though perhaps yet more important and decisive achievement, accomplished at a later date by the whole British army. I say I will not weaken the effect of the recital of the particulars of that second battle and victory, as detailed in the despatches of the gallant officers in command, by attempting what must be in comparison a poor and inefficient narrative. I will do the members of this House, the fellow countrymen of these distinguished officers, the justice to believe that they are familiar with all the details of these signal exploits. Let us not forget, in commemorating the valour of our own countrymen, to give due praise to the skill and bravery of our defeated enemy. After our successes over them on the 18th and 21st December, they so far recovered from their disasters, that, undaunted, they met on the field, after the lapse of a few weeks, the whole force of the British army. Sir Henry Hardinge, speaking of their conduct in the battle of Sobraon, says, "Such was the bravery of the enemy, that being defeated they walked away, and, in the middle of the river, disdained to ask for quarter." But I will not enter into particulars—for every man who hears me is master of the details of the battle fought on the 10th February; he is aware that the well-appointed army of the Sikhs suffered a complete and a signal discomfiture; that their loss was enormous; that, after the exhibition of great valour, they were driven across the Sutlej; and that the British army, crossing at the Sutlej near Ferozepore, as well as at the point where the battle was fought, united its forces and marched together towards the capital of the Sikh territory. All this was accomplished in a period not exceeding eight weeks from the day on which the first incursion of the enemy took place; and during that period of eight weeks the enemy was triumphantly defeated wherever he was encountered. Every gun which the Sikhs had brought to bear on our troops was captured; and after a series of decisive victories, we now probably occupy the capital city of the Punjab. I believe that not more than one-third of the whole force engaged consisted of Europeans; and the example which those Europeans set was worthy of being followed by the native soldiers. They did follow it—and on every occasion during the four successive and desperate conflicts in which they were engaged, was the honour of the British name worthily sustained by the commanders, the officers, and the men. The victory, this succession of victories, has been interrupted by no single failure; it was unsullied by any imputation on our arms and character. We have not been influenced by a grasping spirit of aggrandizement—we have simply repelled an attack made upon us in a time of profound peace—all national engagements on our part having been faithfully kept, there not having been a pretext, even in the shape of justifiable preparation and defence, for the aggression that was made upon us. Those Sikh chiefs with whom we have had communication since the defeat of the enemy, who disavow any participation in his perfidy, and profess to disapprove of it, have frankly acknowledged the object they had in view. By their powerful

artillery, and by their formidable infantry and cavalry, they thought to overpower the two detachments of the British forces stationed at the extremities of the frontier line—Ferozepore and Ludiana; having overpowered them, they intended to march at once to Delhi, and hoped by their success to shake the allegiance of our Indian soldiery. That was the avowed object they had in view. It was admitted that there was no excuse for this aggression from any proceedings on our part; we had been guilty of no breach of treaty, and had done nothing that could justify hostility. The same persons admitted also, that they should derive consolation even from the failure of a rebellious and mutinous army—that the next best thing to victory would be a defeat, since it would lead to the dispersion and annihilation of a force which it was impossible to control. For success so gained, and for triumph in a conflict so unprovoked, I think there will be but one universal and unanimous expression of gratitude within these walls. There is much to adorn and nothing to sully our victory; and I do hope that, now it has been achieved, it will give lasting peace to India; that a general conviction will be felt of our power—a conviction of the superiority of British arms, that will ensure a long enjoyment of tranquillity to that country. I trust that this may be our last battle, and that hereafter we may be enabled to direct our undivided attention to the amelioration of the condition of our Indian fellow-subjects, and the improvement of the natural resources of our Indian empire. In that anticipation the House will, I am sure, permit me to refer to some circumstances which may well fill our hearts with joy and exultation. The two leaders of our victorious army, the Governor-general and the Commander-in-chief, have throughout these operations set an example of cordial concert and union—an utter forgetfulness of themselves, to which the happy result is greatly to be attributed. All matters of punctilio were sacrificed, and Sir Henry Hardinge consented to serve as second in command. On the other hand, there was not a suggestion offered by Sir Henry Hardinge which was not thankfully accepted by Sir Hugh Gough. Hoping, as I have said, that this may be the last occasion on which I shall have to perform the gratifying duty of proposing a public acknowledgment for victory, and a public expression of admiration for the high qualities of our illustrious countrymen, I will, with the permission of the House, refer to a document, not of a public character, that has been put into my hand since I entered the House this evening—it is a letter from Sir Hugh Gough, which was never intended to meet the public eye; but it does him so much honour, that I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of reading it. He says:—"It is now with pride and with pleasure I enclose you a copy of my despatch, detailing one of the most splendid and decisive victories upon record—the Waterloo of India. I have entered so fully both into detail and commendation in my despatch to the Governor-general, that it would be impossible for me to enlarge upon a subject embracing the warmest feelings of my heart. Policy, however, precluded me publicly recording my sentiments on the splendid gallantry of our fallen foe, or to record the acts of heroism displayed, not only individually, but almost collectively, by the Sikh sirdars and army; and I declare, were it not from a deep conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body of men. Never, in the page of military history, has the hand of an all-wise Being been so signally manifested: to Him, therefore, be the glory; we, as his instruments, feel the pride. But I cannot pass over—I cannot too strongly record—facts which, whilst they add lustre to the native army, afford to me, as its head, inexpressible pride and pleasure. For upwards of a month, when the two armies were close in front of one another, notwithstanding the numerous temptations held out to our sepoys by men of their own colour and religion; namely, greatly increased pay, from seven to twelve rupees a month, and immediate promotion, I had but three desertions from this large force. Nor should I omit to mention, as a proof of the high state of discipline of this splendid army, that trade has been carried on unreservedly since we crossed the Sutlej in the several Sikh towns around which our divisions have been necessarily placed for the procurement of water, and the same confidence has been shown as though we were in one of our long-established provinces."

The example set by two gallant commanders, of disregarding military punctilio, and looking exclusively to their country's honour and to the safety of the army, told, as might naturally be expected, on those placed under their orders. Sir Hugh



Gough speaks of an officer who joined only the night before the battle, and pays him a tribute which I am proud to mention. This officer (Brigadier Irvine) had made every exertion to join the army, in the hope of being placed in the prominent station to which, by his rank, he was entitled; and, as I have said, he arrived only the night before the battle. The command would naturally have devolved upon him, but he declined to assume it, in order that all the credit might attach to the officer who in point of rank was inferior, but who had superintended the preparations for the coming action. While we are bestowing due praise on such devotion to public duty, let us not forget the example that had been set by the Governor-general and Commander-in-chief. That example had, no doubt, influenced the conduct of other brave and honourable men, who were willing to make a sacrifice, not of mere personal interest, for that they disregarded, but of that which was really dear to them, the opportunity of personal distinction. I am sure the House will permit me, among expressions of gratitude to the surviving conquerors, to mingle some of deep regret at the loss we have sustained. On the former occasion I had to lament the sacrifice of life, and I met with universal and generous sympathy; I had to condole with the country on the death of that gallant officer, Sir Robert Sale, who was known to most of us, and endeared to all who had intercourse with him, by the kindly frankness of his deportment. On this occasion I have to deplore the loss of several officers of the highest reputation, and the first I shall name is Sir Robert Dick. I am confident that the House will permit me shortly to recite what is the extent of national gratitude due for the former services of this gallant officer. He entered the service in 1800. He embarked with the 78th regiment for Sicily in 1806, and was wounded in battle. He accompanied the expedition to Egypt, and was present at the taking of Alexandria. He embarked with the 42nd regiment in 1809, and was again wounded at Fuentes d'Onor. He commanded the second battalion of the 42nd regiment at Ciudad Rodrigo. He was at the battle of Salamanca, at the storming of St. Michel, and was present during the siege of Burgos. In 1815 he was severely wounded, and, after a life of honour, he at last fell in the battle, for the happy result of which we are about to make our grateful acknowledgments. I deeply regret that in the face of the House of Commons I cannot do justice to every officer and to every man who fell in this encounter, and sacrificed his life in his country's service. Some limit, however, must be imposed on the mention of individual officers, and the least invidious limit is that of rank and standing in the army. Not outstepping that limit, I must deplore the loss of another gallant soldier. On the day which deprived us for ever of the services of Sir Robert Dick, there also fell Lieutenant-colonel Taylor, of the 29th regiment. The father of this gallant officer, leading into action the 20th light dragoons, of which he was Lieutenant-colonel, lost his life in the Peninsula. The father fell at Vimeira—the son met an equally glorious death at the battle of Sobraon. I will, with the permission of the House, briefly recapitulate the services of Lieutenant-colonel Taylor. He commanded the light company of the 20th foot in the expedition against Kalapore, in 1827-28; served on the frontier during the Canadian rebellion, where, in the successful attack of a village occupied by the rebels, he rendered an important service; commanded a brigade of infantry in the actions of the 18th, 21st, and 22nd of December, 1845, wherein he was wounded; commanded also the troops sent to keep up the communication between Sir Henry Smith and the main army, whilst the former was engaged in the operations which led to the battle of Aliwal; and a brigade of infantry at the battle of Sobraon, where he fell. His death is thus announced by Sir Hugh Gough:—"The army has sustained a heavy loss by the death of Brigadier Taylor, an able officer, and worthy to have been at the head of her Majesty's 20th regiment, by which he was beloved and respected."

How many there are who have lost their sons and relatives in these conflicts I need not say; but I have been thrown of late into frequent and necessary intercourse with one, whose gallant son died on the field of battle in this encounter. It has been my duty, my painful duty in some respects, to hold constant communication with Lord Fitzroy Somerset, whose brave offspring, had he survived, would have supported the honour of his family, and transmitted to another generation the high character of his father. Lord Fitzroy Somerset himself has run an illustrious career. He accompanied the Duke of Wellington throughout all the battles of the

Peninsula, and was severely wounded at Waterloo. Had his son survived, the satisfaction of Lord Fitzroy Somerset, in contemplating the recent services of his former comrades, would have been unalloyed. He has now to mingle with admiration of their valour the sorrows of a father for a painful and irreparable loss. If, in mentioning the name of the gallant and lamented Somerset, I am transgressing the limit I proposed to observe, the services, and character, and station of the father, his relation to the British army and to its illustrious chief, will fully justify me in offering this, the best consolation to the wounded feelings of a father and a soldier. I wish I could do justice to my own feelings by naming many others scarcely less distinguished or less lamented; but the list is so numerous of those entitled to grateful remembrance, that I trust a reluctant silence will not be imputed to any want of a due sense of their claims and merits. When I review the names of those who have taken a distinguished part in these and other recent victories in India—the names of Sir Henry Hardinge, Sir Hugh Gough, Sir Henry Smith, Sir Charles Napier, Sir Robert Dick, and General Thackwell—(several members here added the name of Gilbert)—I reflect with satisfaction and pride that these distinguished men received their military education under the auspices of the Duke of Wellington. It adds new lustre even to his immortal name, that his school has produced pupils who have so profited by his example. There are officers not less eminent, who have not had the honour and advantage of serving under the Duke of Wellington; but on them his precepts and example have not been lost. Such men as Nott, and Pollock, and Gilbert, and other bright ornaments of the Indian army, have treasured up the memory of "Assaye," and the brilliant career of the Duke of Wellington throughout his Indian campaigns. His Indian correspondence, his comments on the retreat of Colonel Monson, his lessons on the art of Indian warfare, have exercised their just influence on those to whom, perhaps, his person is unknown. It may be that at this very moment the Duke of Wellington is bestowing, in the House of Peers, the unstinted meed of his praise on these signal achievements, and is stamping an additional value even on the thanks of parliament, by bearing his high testimony to the skill and valour of those to whom they will be justly given. With what conscious pride must he reflect on the number of gallant men distinguished in these Indian campaigns, who have heretofore fought and bled under his command, and, after the lapse of many years, have now worthily followed his example! And long after he shall have been gathered to his fathers, will that example instruct and animate the British army. It will teach them that success is ensured by the calm and dispassionate calculation of remote contingencies—by the preparation for all vicissitudes of fortune—by valour tempered according to the exigencies that require its display—now patient and enduring—now reckless and desperate. It will teach them fortitude under disappointment, and moderation in the hour of victory. The memory of the high qualities and the great deeds of the Duke of Wellington will be for ages a tower of defence to his country, inspiring her military councils with wisdom and justice, and guiding heroes that are yet unborn in the paths of glory. I conclude by moving—

"That the thanks of this House be given to Major-general Sir Henry George Smith, Knight-Commander of the most honourable military order of the Bath, for his skilful and meritorious conduct, when in command of the British troops employed against a large portion of the Sikh army, of greatly superior numbers; and for the signal valour and judgment displayed by him in the battle of Aliwal on the 28th of January, 1846, when the enemy's force was totally defeated, and new lustre added to the reputation of the British arms.

"That the thanks of this House be given to the several officers, European and native, under the command of Sir Henry Smith, for the distinguished services rendered by them at the battle of Aliwal.

"That this House doth highly approve of, and commend, the intrepidity and exemplary discipline displayed by the non-commissioned officers and private soldiers, European and native, in the battle of Aliwal, on the 28th of January, 1846, in their attack on the enemy's position, by which the Sikhs were completely routed, and driven in confusion across the Sutlej, with the loss of all their artillery and military equipment; and that the same be signified to them by the commanders of the several corps, who are desired to thank them for their gallant behaviour.

"That, in requesting the Governor-general of India to communicate these resolutions to the several officers referred to therein, this House desires to acknowledge the zeal and judgment evinced by the right honourable Lieutenant-general Sir Henry Hardinge, Knight Grand Cross of the most honourable military order of the Bath, Governor-general of India; and also by General Sir Hugh Gough, Bart., Knight Grand Cross of the most honourable military order of the Bath, Commander-in-chief of the forces in India, in supplying Major-general Sir Henry Smith with such reinforcements and military means as enabled him, under Divine Providence, to overcome all the obstacles thrown in his way by a brave and determined enemy."

Resolution agreed to *nemine contradicente*.

### PROTECTION OF LIFE (IRELAND) BILL.

APRIL 27, 1846.

In the debate on the question that the above bill be read a first time,—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows:—Sir, whether her Majesty's government would obtain greater popularity by persevering with this measure or by abandoning it, is hardly a consideration which ought to influence the conduct of those who are responsible for the maintenance of the public peace in Ireland. It may be true that more popularity might be gained by a willing acquiescence on our part in the proposal of the hon. gentleman who has just sat down (Mr. Hawes); but that popularity would be gained at a costly sacrifice, if it were obtained by the sacrifice of the duty of those who are responsible for maintaining the public peace; and if it were accompanied also by increased danger to life and property in Ireland. Sir, I said at an early period of these discussions, that I should think I was wanting in due respect both for the country to which this measure refers, and the importance of the subject, if I permitted this debate to close without offering some observations upon it; and as I would fain hope, after the full and able discussion which this measure has undergone in this preliminary stage of its progress, that we are now approaching the close of the present debate, I am unwilling to postpone to a later period the performance of a duty which I feel to be incumbent upon me. Sir, I wish, in the first place, to explain to the House what were the motives of her Majesty's government in proposing that the first stage of this bill should be interposed in the progress of another bill of the deepest importance, in my opinion, to the welfare of this country. I assure the House that it was not from any punctilious desire of adherence to established usage, that we felt it our duty to propose the first reading of this bill. What were the circumstances under which this bill, or rather this subject generally, was brought under the consideration of both houses of parliament? In the speech from the throne, on the first day of the session, the first practical measure which her Majesty recommended to our consideration was, a measure for the purpose of giving, if possible, increased security to life in Ireland, on account of the frequency of assassination. Her Majesty did recommend to the consideration of parliament three or four measures of great importance. The first was the state of Ireland as regarded the frequency of assassination, and the necessity, in her Majesty's opinion, of taking some precautions to prevent the frequent recurrence of that crime. What was the answer returned by this House to that part of the speech from the throne? There was an assurance given on the part of the House, not that it would adopt any measures that might be proposed by the government, but that the House was deeply impressed with the importance of the subject, and that it would take into its consideration measures which had for their object the prevention of this grievous crime. A bill for that purpose was brought into the House of Lords. It passed through that House with very little opposition. The Irish peers, connected by political sentiments with many of the hon. gentlemen opposite, felt convinced of the necessity of this or of some such measure, and gave their assent to this bill. I believe there was no opposition to the principle of the bill, at least there was none which was marked by a vote; and the bill was sent down to the House of Commons. It has been the uniform, I believe the invariable, practice, with respect to a measure undertaken by

the government—a measure of this importance, a measure recommended to the consideration of parliament, on the first day of the session, from the throne—it has, I say, been the invariable usage, on such a measure introduced by the government being brought from the House of Lords into this House, to give to that measure a first reading. Each member of the House of Lords has a right to lay a bill on the table of the House, and, as a matter of course, that bill is read a first time. No such usage prevails here; but it has been the universal course, with respect to measures of this description, brought in by the government, recommended from the throne, when they have passed either branch of the legislature, to treat them with so much of deference—to show such a willingness, not to adopt them, but to take them into consideration, as at least to permit them to pass the preliminary stage of a first reading. Now, I am not denying that hon. gentlemen opposite have a perfect right to contest the bill in its first stage. I am not implying that they unduly exercised any privilege which they possess, by calling the attention of the House to the general state of Ireland; I am only now considering the question, whether her Majesty's government would have been justified, seeing what has been the universal course heretofore pursued by parliament, in permitting this bill to lie on the table without the slightest notice being taken of it. Sir, I do not admit that the House of Lords would have had any right to resent our omission to read it a first time. It was from no mere punctilious deference for the House of Lords that we took this course; but of this we felt deeply convinced, that if we permitted this bill, so recommended from the throne, and so passed by the House of Lords, to lie on this table without notice, the representatives of Ireland might accuse us, and justly accuse us, of offering an insult to that country. The bill is undoubtedly one by which it was proposed to suspend the ordinary liberties of the subject. Look at the character of the measure. The more you insist on its unconstitutional character, the more you establish the necessity that a bill of this kind should not be treated with levity, nor disregarded by her Majesty's government. This bill does empower the Lord-lieutenant to deprive the subject of liberties which, under all ordinary circumstances, he is entitled to enjoy; and would it have been right, considering the special application of this bill to one part only of the empire, would it have been right for the government, in a matter of such immense importance, to have shown such an apparent disregard for the great principles of civil liberty as would have been implied in our thus departing, for the first time, from that which had been the uniform usage? I feel the importance of the opposition now offered by you, the representatives of Ireland, to the first reading of this bill; but believe me, in the case of a bill infringing, as I admit that this does, upon your liberties, and applying especially to Ireland, if we had departed from that course which in the case of every English bill has been uniformly observed, the time would soon have arrived when you would have charged us with doing to Ireland a great injustice, and showing a culpable indifference with regard to that liberty of which we ought to be the guardians. Sir, I think I need hardly refer to the injurious surmise which I have heard thrown out, that her Majesty's government had become indifferent to the progress of the Corn-bill, and that they had interposed this discussion, or rather this first reading of another measure, with a view to the defeat of that bill. I know that hon. gentlemen have not said so for themselves, but they have said in the course of the discussion that such an impression exists on the part of the public. Sir, I shall be prepared to give whatever proof may be required of the sincerity of my convictions on the subject of the Corn-bill. It is sufficient for me now to state that the progress of the discussion, the lapse of time, and intervening events, have more strongly confirmed me in the feeling which I expressed when I proposed the permanent and final adjustment of this question. Sir, I will not deny that even during these debates my opinions on that subject have undergone a change; but it is this change, that restrictions which I at first believed to be impolitic, I now believe to be unjust, and, consequently, a sense of their injustice precludes any compromise on my part. That which I have proposed, both with respect to the amount of duty and the continuance of duty, is all that I am enabled to offer; and in answer to injurious suspicions, I think it enough to say that I shall be perfectly ready to testify by any public act the sincerity of my intentions. Therefore, Sir, I say that the first consideration which entered into the minds of the government in proposing, pursuant to uniform custom, the first

reading of this bill, was not any lurking desire to interpose any difficulties to the progress of those commercial measures which they had proposed to this House, or to defer for a single day the final decision of the question which they embrace. I now proceed, Sir, to review the considerations which have induced her Majesty's government, with great pain and sincere reluctance, to propose any measure of a harsh or extraordinary character with respect to Ireland. Sir, the hon. gentleman the member for the city of Cork (Mr. M'Carthy), who spoke in the course of this evening, and who made a speech, I think, as remarkable for its ability as it was distinguished for the brevity with which observations of so striking a character were conveyed—that hon. gentleman expressed his belief that I had no other disposition but one of kindness towards the people of Ireland, but that my good wishes were overruled by some malign influence. I do assure the hon. member that he does me but justice in attributing to me the most sincere interest in that part of her Majesty's dominions; but that he does me injustice in supposing that any such influence could overrule my sense of duty. If I did not believe that a positive necessity required some such measure to give protection to life in Ireland, and to prevent social disorganization, and the deterioration, consequent on frequent crimes being unpunished, of the national character, no consideration would have induced me, or those with whom I act, to have been party to this measure. I was much struck with one observation which fell from one of the hon. gentlemen who represents Ireland—the hon. member for Drogheda—I think as to the grounds on which such a measure ought to have been introduced. He said that we, who propose this measure, are bound to establish three facts: we are bound to show, first, that there prevails in Ireland, at the present time, both as to the frequency of crime, but, above all, as to the character and nature of the offences committed, a necessity for some extraordinary measure; next, that we are bound to show that all the ordinary resources of the established law have been exhausted, that we have done all we could with the instruments the constitution places in our hands, for the preservation of life and the maintenance of order; and, thirdly, that there is a rational ground for hoping and believing that the particular measure proposed, which is at variance with the established principles of law, is likely to be effectual for the purpose to which it is to be applied. I think, Sir, that we are bound to establish—by proof as far as proof is possible, and by argument so far as reasoning can advance towards proof—those three facts to which the hon. member for Drogheda refers. We are bound to prove that at the present moment, from the nature and the frequency of crimes—I speak more particularly of assassinations and crimes affecting the public peace—Ireland is in an unusual position. We are bound also to prove that we have exhausted all the ordinary means provided by the law; and we are bound also to establish by argument—for proof in such a case is impossible—that the measure proposed will conduce to the end in view. The future effect cannot be proved. All we can do is to attempt to establish in the minds of those whom we invite to consult on the subject, a strong moral conviction that it is probable that the proposed law will be effectual for the purpose intended. Now, the hon. gentleman who spoke last contested the facts which were adduced by my right hon. friend, the secretary for the home department, for the purpose of showing that there exists now, in the increase of crime in Ireland, an extraordinary necessity for a measure of this kind. The increase of crime, and also the character of that crime, can alone justify such a measure. You must consider the character of the crime, the possibility of detecting and punishing, the effect of impunity, and the danger there is that, through impunity, crime may be contagious—you must consider these things before you come to the conclusion that a law of this kind is unjust in principle. Following the hon. member for Lambeth, I will first take into consideration the frequency of crime in Ireland. The figures the hon. member has quoted may be correct; but I do not think he will be able to contest the facts to which I am going to refer. I am about to contrast the year 1843 with the year 1844. In 1844 there was some increase of crime—I speak of crimes which endanger the public tranquillity—but we were unwilling to apply without necessity to the House for extraordinary powers. Let us, however, take the comparison, though to compare one year with the one immediately following may sometimes be fallacious. [Mr. Hawes: To what document are you referring?] I believe that the document I refer to has been published. What

I hold in my hand is a document furnished by the police in Ireland; a comparative view of the extent of crime from 1835 to 1845, and which is, as to the later years, I believe, exactly concurrent with that which is laid on the table of the House. [Mr. Hawes: I quoted the special report of the constabulary in Ireland from 1842 to 1845.] Yes; and therefore including the years to which I refer. I will leave you to judge whether my selection of crimes is a fair one. The different heads are homicides, conspiracies to murder, assaults on the police, aggravated assaults, demand for or robbery of arms, administering oaths, sending threatening notices, attacking houses, firing into dwellings: offences which do not involve any serious disturbance of the public peace I shall exclude. I shall take only crimes, the frequency of which is characteristic of a diseased state of society. I begin with homicides. In 1843 the number of homicides reported at the constabulary office was 122; in 1845 they were 139. Are those numbers the same as the numbers in the return to which the hon. gentleman referred? [Mr. Hawes: Yes.] Then the returns are the same. The number of crimes, then, in the two years 1843 and 1845, are stated as follows:—

| OFFENCES.                            | 1843. | 1845. | OFFENCES.                   | 1843. | 1845. |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|
| Homicides .....                      | 122   | 139   | Administering oaths .....   | 51    | 223   |
| Conspiring to murder. ....           | 8     | 8     | Threatening notices .....   | 910   | 1944  |
| Assault on police and magistrates .. | 48    | 72    | Attacking houses .....      | 215   | 483   |
| Aggravated assault .....             | 444   | 540   | Firing into dwellings ..... | 87    | 138   |
| Demand or robbery of arms .....      | 119   | 551   |                             |       |       |

An hon. gentleman opposite seemed to consider the offence of issuing threatening notices as one that ought hardly to enter into a statement on the subject. [Mr. Powell: No; but there are fabrications.] Sir, making allowance for that, the increase of that particular offence is a consideration which ought not to be left out of view. With deference to the hon. gentleman's local experience, an increase from 910 in 1843, to 1944, is a significant circumstance. Threatening notices themselves inflict no injury; but they are enough to disturb the tranquillity of families, and those families know this fact, that the execution of the sentence of vengeance follows too often. There may be instances in which threatening notices are fabricated. It may be possible, and I believe it is. I make every deduction on that account—I wish to be chargeable with no exaggeration. Still the increase of that offence, coupled with the increase of the other offences to which I have referred, is, I am afraid, a strong proof of a diseased state of society. Well, then, we come to attacking houses, and we find that the instances in which houses were attacked in 1843, as returned to the police, were 252; and in 1845, 480. Now, in the course of two years, we find here, in such an offence as that of attacking houses, an increase from 252 to 480: that surely is a *prima facie* case that the existing law is inadequate for the repression of crime. I now take that other and more heinous crime, the firing into dwelling-houses. In 1843, there were 87 cases, and in 1845, 138. I think, in the character of the offences to which I have referred, and the rapid increase in the number of those offences, I have given a sufficient answer to the speech of the hon. gentleman who attempted to show that crime was as frequent in 1843 as in 1845. So much for the frequency; and I now come to the character of those offences, and I cannot use more emphatic language with regard to them than that which has been used by the opponents of the present measure. I shall first take the language which has been used by the hon. member for Drogheda, in which he spoke of the character and quality of those crimes. He said, that he viewed them with horror, as indicating that the national character of Ireland was undergoing a change—that heretofore there had been on the part of Irishmen a respect for age and sex—that the helplessness of age and the character of sex had been sufficient to protect them from injury—and that the aged and the female were held in peculiar respect; but in reading these details of atrocity, he said he was afraid there was a change in the national character. Now, Sir, let us see whether age or sex constitutes a guarantee against injury or outrage; and this is a most important consideration—looking not at the frequency of crime, but at its character; and the House will bear in mind that this is not my language, but that of one of the opponents of this measure. Sir, I admit that the character of that country stood high for a chivalrous feeling of deference to the female sex, and in respect for age; but I take the account of the hon. member for Drogheda—one of the most decided opponents of the bill—and I ask the House whether any stronger

language could be used to demonstrate what has been the effect on the national character of the frequent repetition of those crimes? I shall take the language of the hon. member who closed the debate on the previous evening, the hon. member for Kilkenny, for I took down his words. He says—"I am overwhelmed with disgust and shame at the hideous crimes committed in some parts of Ireland."

"I am overwhelmed with disgust and shame at the hideous crimes!" Well, then, and are these crimes to be committed and to remain unpunished? Are we to be perfectly passive, and adopt no measures to check the frequency of atrocities which fill hon. members connected with that country with disgust and shame? Let me take some of the offences which justify the description given, not by us, but by hon. members who are the opponents of the bill, as to the effect of those crimes on the national character, which we have been disposed to hold in just estimation. Now, Sir, I will take the case—although I admit that it would be most unfair to judge of the character of this or any other country from one or two isolated cases, but still such cases as those to which I shall refer are not to be entirely disregarded—I shall take a case in which a party has been persecuted for merely asserting his rights, and I shall ask you what protection is there to be given to these men? These men are in a humble position. They were three brothers of the name of Hogan—John Hogan, Barney Hogan, and Marshal Hogan. Barney and Marshal were both fired at in the month of February last, and the other a few weeks ago. In the language of the official statement—"The murdered man was brother to Darby and Michael Hogan, both of whom have been fired at, the one in February last, the others a few weeks ago; they have police protection by my recommendation, two men being furnished on alternate days from two neighbouring stations—a plan that I now see works badly, for the draught renders it nearly inoperative for other duties. I would, therefore, advise that two men be stationed permanently at Hogan's. I have mentioned this to the police officer, and it meets his approval."

Had they no protection? Was nothing done to rescue them? They had police protection. Two policemen were stationed permanently for their protection. But what became of the first of these brothers? I quote again the official statement:—"It is my painful duty to state to you, for the information of his Excellency the Lord-lieutenant, that at dusk last evening a farmer, named John Hogan, residing at Ballinderry, was shot dead close to his own house; three or four shots were discharged at him so close as to set his clothes on fire, and his body perforated in every part with balls. The cause assigned is, that he had taken an acre of land joining his farm, whence a neighbour had been dispossessed."

The cause assigned for the murder was, that he had taken an acre of land adjoining his own farm, from which a neighbour had been dispossessed. That was the offence. I am sure the hon. gentleman (Mr. P. Scrope), who thinks some alteration ought to be made in reference to the tenure of land, will admit that it was not to be permitted that John Hogan should be shot because he had taken land from which a neighbour was dispossessed. The hon. gentleman will, no doubt, concur with me in holding that such offences as the offence perpetrated in the instance I have now cited, should if possible be prevented, whatever our permanent remedies may be for the amelioration of Ireland. If we are to exact allegiance from John Hogan, and we allow him to be riddled with balls close to his own door for taking a vacant acre of land, we are not fulfilling the conditions and obligations that society imposes. Take the case of those three persons. The three have been shot at—one in February last; one a few weeks since; and the two brothers are obliged to be protected by two policemen; while the third has had his body perforated with balls. Sir, this is an isolated and individual case, and it may not be fair to judge from it of the character of the country; but this is a perfectly different question from, whether it is not the duty of the legislature and the executive to provide for those who have a just claim upon us for protection, and whether those who render allegiance to the sovereign should not have the protection of the laws extended to them? The executive government is bound to do what in it lies to afford them protection. I next take the case of the man which justifies the lamentation of the hon. member for Drogheda, and I say that this is a reflection on the national character—that is, when there is no longer any deference paid to either sex or age. In the case of Laurence Leahy, the magistrate writes—"On the evening

of the 11th inst., at five o'clock, an armed party of seven men entered the house of Laurence Leahy, a respectable farmer, and rushed at him; but Leahy, who was a very tall and powerful man, knocked down four of them with his fist; but, after a struggle, he was overpowered and beat down; when on the ground, his wife threw herself over him, but [what did these men do when the wife of the unfortunate man interposed her own body—risked her life in the attempt to save him?] one of the fellows placed a gun quite close to his leg, and fired it, which dreadfully shattered the leg, and then struck him on the head with guns."

Then there is the case of a man named Lynch. He had put in an ejectment process, and this is the police report:—"Poor Lynch could not escape; the under-tenants, to a man, were leagued against him, and lived all contiguous to his house, so that his every movement was watched. About a month since, sub-inspector Burke, of this station, received private information that there was a party hired to shoot Lynch the morning following."

A man receiving £5 or £6 to commit a murder! A party of police remained for some time in Mr. Lynch's house. No attempt was made. The police could not stay there permanently; but it was perfectly plain that an attempt would be made, and it was made. The magistrate says:—"I never witnessed a more distressing scene than the wailing of this poor man's wife, daughters, and sons presented; now not only deprived of their parent, but of all the property they possessed."

If there are to be victims, if a man is to be murdered in presence of his wife and family, if such occurrences are frequent, it is not without ground that the hon. gentleman dreads a deterioration of the national character. There is a reign of terror. A man of the name of Egan had a tent on the race-course of Ballina. According to the official account—"A party of twelve or fifteen men entered the tent, and grievously assaulted Egan and his servant, Landrigan, with stones. On the following day the matter came to the knowledge of the police, who proceeded to the tent, and found Egan pursuing his usual avocations, complaining but little of his injuries, unwilling to afford any information on the subject, and totally denying any knowledge of the assailants. At that time, and for a day or two after, Egan suppressed all reference to the case of Landrigan; and it was not until the latter was speechless and past recovery that Egan apprised the police of his condition. Landrigan died that day, and Egan became so ill that his recovery for a while was doubtful."

There is, then, a reluctance to give information in criminal cases, and so a check is placed on the ordinary execution of the law. Egan had been beaten himself, and so had his servant. But not until his servant is at extremity does he send for the police. The servant dies; and Egan dies also. Here is another case which occurred on the 26th of November last:—"The board of directors of the Mining Company of Ireland hereby give notice to all whom it may concern, that the Company's works at Earl's Hill colliery will be suspended on Saturday, the 20th of December next, or the earliest day admissible under existing contracts. The board has been reluctantly impelled to adopt this course by the outrages and threats to which the company's stewards, Martin Morris and others, have been subjected with impunity, notwithstanding large rewards offered for information which might lead to the punishment of the offenders, and by the threatening notices subsequently served on those well-disposed workmen who are desirous to work under the Company, and earn support for themselves and families, but whose lives are too highly valued by the board to be risked by a continuance of the works until sufficient protection can be afforded to them."

In consequence of the menaces held out, and the dangers with which it appeared the officers and workmen of the Company were surrounded, the works were stopped, to the great injury of the district. Well, then, let us take the number of murders in 1845, and the number of convictions. I have counted them, and I find there are 146 cases of murder, and, I think, there are not more than thirteen convictions. There is the return giving the number of murders since the 1st of February 1842, specifying the county and barony of the county where such murders have been perpetrated. There is a separate return of attempts to murder not attended with bodily injury. This return to which I refer, is of persons murdered. I shall read the designations of the persons murdered:—"Field labourer," "magistrate,"



'labourer,' 'poor woman,' 'farmer,' 'labourer,' 'labourer,' 'servant,' 'labourer,' 'pensioner's wife,' 'labourer,' 'labourer,' 'labourer,' "

Look at the classes! [Mr. Powell: Is that all Ireland?] In all Ireland. Why, a farmer living in a slated house, or a gentleman in his mansion house, may have some protection; but what is the condition of the labourer? I think, if you can afford protection to men of that class—if you can prevent the repetition of outrages against those least able to guard against them—though you do violate some constitutional principle, yet, so great is the evil of permitting murders to be committed almost with entire impunity, that there is no restraint to which one would not rather submit, than suffer the continuance of that monster grievance. I have attempted to show from the frequency of crimes endangering life, and connected with the preservation of the public peace—from the nature and quality of the crimes injurious to the character of the country—from the frequent instances of complete impunity—from the fear there is of giving evidence either before a magistrate or in court—from the danger there is that these crimes will become contagious and spread to other districts, unless some vigorous effort be made at repression, I think I have made out a strong case that there is, in the frequency and the character of crime in Ireland, an imperative call on the legislature to consider—no more than this—whether precautions are not necessary? I now come to the second point: Have we exhausted the means which the existing law puts at our disposal for the repression of crime? There is an immense police force. The military force, exemplary as they are in the discharge of their duty, are not the proper force to employ in this service. But there is a police force of nearly 10,000 men. I have not heard any allegation that the government had been negligent in the direction of that force, or that it has been improperly distributed. A mere addition to the police force would not be accompanied with any great advantage. I am not aware that that instrument for the maintenance of the public peace, has been applied in any manner which subjects the government to condemnation, or requires from them any explanation. I believe that of the force placed at the command of the government, every effort has been made to make it as available as possible. But some hon. members have said, "You have not sufficiently tried the efficacy of special commissions: wherever you have issued these special commissions, crime appears to have decreased." Now, I think, with every respect for the opinion of others, that this is, after all, a very inefficacious instrument for meeting the evils with which we have now to deal. There is no use in sending down special commissions, unless we are prepared with the evidence necessary to punish for crimes that have been committed. The state of crime in Ireland is frightful; but the existence of it does by no means prove the necessity of sending down a special commission. It is not wise to hurry on the trials of offenders. It is not wise to incur the risk of defeat upon imperfect evidence, nor is it wise to exhibit the inefficacy of the law by sending down a special commission, that would be followed by no good or satisfactory result. It is not sufficient to demonstrate the frequency of crime, and to urge the necessity of having a special commission for the suppression of it; but you must also prove that we have the evidence that is necessary to support our accusations, and that we shall be able in all probability to cause the offenders to be brought to justice. Unless, then, you can prove the double fact—namely, the frequency of crime, and the probability of convictions, you do not at all demonstrate the policy of sending down special commissions. But this I must say, that in every instance where immediate examples were made, the most satisfactory efforts were produced in deterring offenders from the repetition of crime. In all cases where the executive government had seen the necessity of taking this course, and the probability of bringing conviction home to the criminal parties, they never permitted considerations of expense or convenience to hinder them from sending down commissions for the special trials of those who had committed these grievous offences against the laws of the country, and the peace of its inhabitants. They have at all times exhibited a promptitude in taking the most efficacious measures for the repression of crime, in order that the signal examples thus made, might have the effect of deterring others from the commission of similar offences; and therefore I am not aware in what single instance the government can be fairly chargeable with not having used every instrument which the constitution and the laws of the country have placed at their disposal for the purpose of bringing offenders

to trial, and of deterring by signal examples others from repeating those crimes. And this was the second point of the hon. baronet's speech, in respect to which he demanded an explanation. The third point referred to by the hon. baronet, the member for Drogheda, is, I think, the most important one for our consideration. It is highly important for us to consider whether this particular measure which we have proposed will be efficacious. I admit, that to propose a measure of this kind would not by itself be likely to prove very efficacious. I think, that to pass such a measure, without adopting any other remedy for the unfortunate state of Ireland, would be an evil uncompensated by any one good. I am fully aware how bad a thing it is to multiply those precedents of exceeding the ordinary powers of the law and the constitution, and that the frequent instances of these measures being adopted in Ireland, is no justification whatever for repeating it. Proof being out of the question, and demonstration impossible, the question is, whether it is probable that this measure will be efficacious, and that it will not turn out to be an unmitigated evil? I will now endeavour to meet this point of the hon. member's speech. I think that I have already shown urgent reasons for attempting something of the kind to meet the present condition of Ireland. And now what do I propose? Why, I find that in the year 1835, the government of the country had taken an exactly similar course on finding enormous evils of the same kind as now exist in Ireland. What course, then, did the government of that period take, feeling their responsibility for the protection of life in Ireland, if it can be protected there, and the necessity of restoring peace and tranquillity there? Now, you have told us that we have disregarded the opinions of the Irish representatives in proposing the present bill. All I can say in answer to that charge is this—that the representatives of Ireland—those gentlemen who were, no doubt, best acquainted with the local circumstances of Ireland at a time of great political excitement, in 1835—these very representatives did, without any remonstrance, consent to a measure, the principle of which was exactly the same as the present one, which is so loudly condemned by them. Well, there are some differences between the former and the present measure—these differences I am perfectly willing to admit. Yes, but let us come to the examination of those points of difference. I am stating now what is the present position of Ireland—the increase of crime in that country—the impunity of crime there—and being responsible for the preservation of the peace there, and the repression of these crimes, we feel it necessary to propose the present measure as a remedy for these evils. Now, what was the remedy which the Irish members had on a former period agreed to for the suppression of these evils? There may be a little difference between this measure and the one brought forward in 1835. We propose, for instance, that the Lord-lieutenant shall be empowered, in case of atrocious crimes being committed in the country, to apply this law to certain districts—a law which imposes upon the inhabitants of such districts to remain within their houses from sunset to sunrise. ["Hear, hear!"] Yes, but you consented to allow the same law, in effect, to be passed in 1835. This is but an amendment of that Coercion Act, and it enables the Lord-lieutenant to proclaim a district—to issue a requisition to the inhabitants of such proclaimed district to remain within their houses from sunset to sunrise, and to place the onus of proving his innocence upon the offender. There was no doubt, as I have already admitted, a difference between the two measures—the great difference was that regarding the penalty. Influenced by no other considerations than a desire to render the measure as efficacious as possible, when we find you, the representatives of Ireland, in 1835—a time of great political excitement—consenting to a law, the principle of which was this curfew clause, which is now so pertinaciously condemned—we thought it but natural that a measure formed upon the basis of the former one, which you so agreed to in 1835, would be equally approved of by you in 1846. The hon. member for Lambeth has just been reading the accounts of the progressive tranquillity of Ireland from the year 1835 to 1840; and he has been boasting of the beneficial effects which had been produced under the former government; but are you aware, that during the whole of that period you had actually in force this very measure. ["No, no!"] I should be sorry in the slightest degree to exaggerate. It might not then have been this very measure, for I have already stated that there is a difference in the penalties. I am glad that the hon. member (Mr. Hawes) challenges me to a closer investigation. In the former measure it is stated that the grand jury shall have

the power to present, to make a presentment, upon which the Lord-lieutenant shall have power to proclaim the district in question. Now, I must say, that it was in deference to your own opinions, and to make, as we considered, a great improvement in the present measure, as compared with the former, that we made an alteration in it in reference to this one point. We thought that if we had proposed that grand juries or magistrates should have the power of calling the powers of this bill into operation, it would have been objected to by the Irish members. We thought you would have said that the executive alone should take the responsibility of putting the act in force. You have said that the landlords will avail themselves of the powers of this act for the purpose of clearing their estates. Is it not better, then, to put it out of all suspicion, that those who will have to administer the law are actuated by such motives? If that is your opinion of the Irish landlords, or of many Irish landlords, which is the best course—to throw upon the executive the entire responsibility, or to permit grand juries or magistrates to invoke the aid of the law? Which is more likely to maintain amicable relations between landlord and tenant, and to preserve unimpaired the confidence of the peasantry in the administration of the law—that the magistrates should have nothing to do with the law but to carry it out, or that the Lord-lieutenant should be asked to do it on the requisition of the local body? We thought this a great and important alteration. But if you think otherwise, you will have an opportunity of altering it. If you think grand juries are the proper body to put the act in force, you will have an opportunity of proposing it in committee, and of making then any alterations in what may seem a hasty and ill-considered change from the bill of 1835. But I have a strong opinion, that it would be better that the responsibility of putting the act in force should rest with the government, rather than with the grand jury or the magistrates, who would afterwards have to carry it out. At all events, I think I have shown that there is no such departure from the law of 1835 as to lead us to expect this decided opposition. There is a material difference, I admit, in the amount of the penalty. By the law of 1835, a person found out at night might be punished as for a misdemeanour; now, he will be punishable by transportation for seven years. There is also a principle in the present bill which is sanctioned by the ancient law of Ireland, of making the vicinage responsible for the act. This is the law to which you object as making bad worse—as likely to arouse the feeling in that country in opposition to the law and the government—viz., that provision which obliges persons to be within doors from sunset to sunrise—that principle affirmed by you in 1835, and which continued on the statute-book without being repealed for five years. I do not think it likely that a change of government induces you to object in 1846 to what you agreed to in 1835. I do not know whether the hon. member who affirmed the progressive improvement of the country from 1835 to 1840, was aware that during the whole of that period the Lord-lieutenant had the power of enforcing that act. Yes, throughout the whole of that period! Nor do we propose that it should come into operation without necessity. The provision has been sanctioned by the legislature, and the Lord-lieutenant is empowered under this bill to order that no person should be found out of his house after sunset. But, although that principle may be sanctioned, it is not necessary that it should be exercised. The best result would be, that the act should never be wanted—that there should be found to be no necessity for its being enforced. But when the Irish members are arguing that it will make matters worse, that it will cause increased exasperation, I remind them that the boast has been of the state of Ireland during those years in which, as I have proved, the act of 1835 was upon the statute-book. I believe there were only four divisions on the subject of that bill. [Mr. S. O'Brien: I protested against the bill, and endeavoured to shorten its duration.] There were only four divisions against the bill. You permitted the bill of 1835 to pass for five years. You permitted the bill to remain in force for five years, without a single motion for its repeal. [Mr. S. O'Brien: I made a motion, subsequent to that, for the repeal of the bill.] And how many voted for it? [Mr. S. O'Brien: Two.] Two! the hon. member for Limerick moved to shorten the duration of the bill to four years, and had two supporters; two years after that he moved to repeal the bill, and had two supporters. And that is the measure which is now said to be “a disgrace to the statute-book—a blot on our legislation,” and only two members voted for its repeal! If subsequent expe-

rience had led you to think the measure unwise, I am the last person to censure you for changing your opinion. I did not believe, until I heard it from your own mouths, that you would object to the provision to which you formerly assented. It was natural that, wishing to know from you the best means of repressing crime, I should propose in 1846 the measure which you proposed in 1835, and which, when it was proposed it should be repealed in two years instead of five, only two of you voted for the shorter term. I do not say you are not justified in opposing it now. I do not question your discretion; but don't accuse us of wishing to insult you, if in 1846, relying upon your authority upon matters of local concern, we take the same measures for repressing crime that you formerly assented to. You express your fears that the bill may be used by the landlords to promote the "clearance system." I cannot conceive a greater offence than for an executive government to lend itself to such a purpose. Let us rather hope, that when the bill is passed it may not be necessary to enforce it—that it may lie dormant, and have the effect of preventing the occurrences it is intended to put down. Let us hope, that if you sanction it for three years, parties may be deterred from the commission of crime; and that without inflicting what I admit is the grievous penalty of forbidding parties to leave their houses after sunset, or subjecting parties to the pecuniary penalties that the law provides—let us hope that it will be silently efficacious as heretofore, and that we may be enabled to dispense with it, and I should rejoice to dispense with it, at an earlier period than we propose. That was the case from 1835 to 1840—there was a progressive diminution of crime while that law was on the statute-book; although not called into operation, the knowledge of its existence was efficacious for the repression of crime. Now, with respect to the penalty, I cannot undertake to say that the infliction of a pecuniary penalty on a district where a murder has been committed will be effectual; this is a provision of a very different nature from that of confining persons within their dwellings; but I think it likely such a provision may have a good effect. If there be frequent murders committed in any district, it does appear to me not an unnatural or unconstitutional remedy to provide, that the family of the murdered man shall have a provision from some fund or other; and the presumption is, that the vicinage which had not guarded effectually against crime shall pay it. It may be novel in principle, but I think it likely to be efficacious in a country like Ireland. We have heard that these murders are committed by strangers brought into the country. I am afraid that these strangers are harboured, in some instances, by the ordinary residents; but if the ordinary residents are aware that the frequent commission of murder subjects them to a pecuniary penalty for the support of the police, and a provision for the family of the murdered man, I think it highly probable that the irruption of these sanguinary strangers, hired to commit murder in that district, will be discouraged by those likely to pay the penalty for such offences. It was in that hope we introduced the enactment in this bill which subjects to pecuniary mulct the parties who may live within the proclaimed district. As I stated before, although I cannot demonstrate that the bill will be efficacious, yet I find that on a former occasion similar enactments were efficacious; that crimes in Ireland were diminished; that the bill was permitted to expire; that it left no such rankling feelings in the Irish mind as some now anticipate; and therefore, judging from the past, I and my colleagues have been induced to infer, that in future the same measure may be effectual for the repression of these heinous offences. Then it has been asked, "Is this the effectual remedy of those evils that unfortunately exist in Ireland?" I answer at once, it would be utterly delusive so to represent it. It partakes in no degree of the character of a perfect remedy; it were an unmitigated evil if not justified by a great necessity. No, it is no remedy for the admitted state of social disorder which unfortunately exists in Ireland. I admit that. It is said, "You have had a similar measure fourteen or fifteen times in Ireland, and it produced no good." But it never was intended as a permanent remedy for the social evils of Ireland. I don't draw the same inference you do from the frequency of its renewal. I think the very fact of its being introduced fourteen or fifteen times, and being permitted to expire, a convincing proof of two facts; first, that the legislature was strongly inclined to deprive the executive of these extraordinary powers at the earliest period it could; and also, that the measure did effect the immediate object in view, namely, diminishing the frequency of crime, and facilitating

the conviction of offenders. No one will, as I have said, more readily admit that, as a permanent measure of relief or improvement, it has no recommendation. I admit that the passing of such a law does not dispense with the necessity of maturely considering what are the real causes from which these disorders arise. If the bill be as effectual as I hope it may be—if it be never called into operation, but yet succeed in repressing crime—I am willing to admit that the obligation of maturely considering what shall be the permanent remedies is in no degree diminished; I think it rather increased than diminished by the passing of laws of this character. I am sorry to say, I view with something more of despondency than many gentlemen do, the possibility of any immediate application of a remedy by legislative enactments: but if angels were to dictate to you what should be your permanent legislation, I see no hope of your producing such an impression on the crime of the country as can dispense with the necessity of some immediate measure of this kind. Depend upon it, that the success of any future measures which may be adopted will be materially impeded by the frequency of crime. The first thing to be done is, to repress these crimes, to prevent the commission of them, and, if committed, to facilitate the discovery of the offenders and ensure their punishment. I won't discuss on the present occasion some of the remedies on which gentlemen have dwelt as likely to apply a permanent remedy to Ireland. They are deserving of the utmost consideration, but they ought to be reserved for separate consideration. That which many hon. gentlemen have announced—the application of a Poor-law to Ireland, upon the principle of the English law—involves considerations of the utmost difficulty. The hon. gentleman the member for Kilkenny (Mr. J. O'Connell) spoke on that subject with great knowledge and judgment. In the course of his long speech, he suggested many reasons why you ought to pause before you adopt the principle of granting a right to relief to the unemployed poor of Ireland. I should be sorry to say anything which could prejudice this case. I admit that the evils under which Ireland is suffering at the present moment, from scantiness of food and disease, are such as it is impossible to meet by any degree of English liberality, and that the frequent recurrence of evils of this kind, imposes upon us the obligation of maturely considering what measures would conduce to the permanent benefit of that country. But, at the same time, do not let us too hastily adopt the conclusion that a Poor-law introduced into Ireland upon the principle of the English law, namely, a right to relief on the part of the unemployed, would meet the existing evils. Though the establishment of such a right might prevent many cases of distress, though it might afford a partial remedy for some present evils, yet you must take a comprehensive view of all the social consequences of establishing such an infeasible claim. You must consider the position in society of those who would have to bear the burden of the system—how little superior they are at present in point of enjoyment to those for whom you seek relief—and how possible it is, unless you establish the wisest precautions, that you may be holding out an incentive to idleness. While, therefore, I admit the magnitude of the present evils—while I admit that their continued existence is almost impossible, I must ask you to consider how inefficacious is the power of the government, with every disposition to do so, to afford an effectual remedy for those evils with which we are now attempting to struggle—I mean the scarcity and disease which prevail in some parts of Ireland. After the discussion which took place upon the modified Poor-law for Ireland, and after hearing the variety of opinions entertained by those best qualified to form a correct judgment on the subject, and who were well cognizant of the wants of the people, I should pause before I could commit myself to the principle that the English Poor-law—namely, the right to relief on the part of the unemployed—should be applied to Ireland. It is impossible to contemplate the state of landed property in Ireland without being compelled to admit that, at present, it is in a most unsatisfactory condition. A great number of estates are wholly unprofitable to their nominal owners, being in the hands, not of proprietors, but of receivers; and it is impossible to contemplate the number of estates in this position, and their unfruitfulness either to the creditor or the proprietor, without being forcibly convinced of the absolute necessity of some change in the law. I entertain the strongest opinion, that there is no country where the maintenance of the great principles of property is more important than in Ireland. I do not believe that you could hope to establish prosperity in any country, to afford encouragement to industry, or

excite a desire to realize the fruits of labour, if you violated any of the great principles of property. At the same time, I must admit that it is impossible to read without deep apprehension the accounts of the great number of tenants evicted in Ireland; and I fear you will find it most difficult to apply any remedy for controlling the power of the landlord. You may be referred to the bill introduced by the hon. member for Rochdale, and you may be called upon to pass that measure; but if you sanction it in the form in which it was proposed, you must not suppose that it will afford any remedy for the state of things to which I have referred. It may be possible to legislate with respect to improvements—it may be just to say to the tenant, “If you effect a great improvement, your landlord, from pique or resentment, shall not deprive you of your holding without giving you compensation.” But if you adopt that principle, and pass such a law, you will not deprive the landlord of the power of evicting or ejecting a pauper tenantry who have made no improvements, and who have no means of effecting them. Such a landlord and tenant bill as that proposed by the hon. member for Rochdale may be an element of social improvement; but do not suppose that it will remedy the particular state of things to which I have called your attention. The hon. member for Cork (Mr. McCarthy) has referred to the disposition of the forfeited estates which were granted to great absentee proprietors. His historical statements may be correct; but they only prove that for 300 years there have been in Ireland deep-seated evils, to which it is most difficult to apply any legislative remedy. The hon. member for Cork has adverted to the forfeitures at the time of the commonwealth. The hon. member says this is one of the causes of the unfortunate state of things which now exists in Ireland. Be it so; but it is no justification of murder. It does not relieve us from the obligation of preventing the commission of monstrous crimes; it rather suggests to us the necessity of proceeding tenderly and cautiously, when we have to deal with evils of so long a growth. You (said the right hon. baronet, addressing the Irish members) may rather distrust the disposition of an Englishman towards Ireland; but, after an official residence of six years in that country, I left it with a most sincere desire for its wealth and prosperity. You will excuse me if I speak with freedom, when I say, that I think you are apt to rely too much upon the power of the executive government. You are always saying that the government ought to act; that the legislature ought to pass new laws. Believe me, that you, the landlords of Ireland, have it in your own power to do more immediate good to your country than can be conferred by the legislature. If you would meet together—I speak of absentees as well as of resident proprietors—and seriously consider what are the real evils of your country, and what are the obligations imposed upon you as possessors of property—if those who are armed with legal power, who eject their tenantry without considering how they are to obtain shelter and subsistence, would reflect on the consequences of such an exercise of their power, and, if the exertion of this power be necessary—if they would maturely consider the duty imposed on them of providing, in some measure, against the dreadful consequences of such a course, which a very little liberality and forbearance would enable them to do—you would confer greater benefit on your country than the government or legislation could effect. I need only remind you of the improvements effected in Ireland by Lord George Hill. Is it true, that only in the year 1838, that nobleman purchased some 18,000 or 20,000 acres of land in the wildest part of Ireland; that he said to himself, “I will perform my duty as a landlord; I will persevere against all difficulties; I will not be deterred by any opposition I may encounter from my tenants or neighbours, but I will persevere in my attempt to improve the condition of the people?” Is it true that that noble lord has succeeded in his attempt? Has he not succeeded, without the advantage of those prejudices which ancient hereditary descent might have created in his favour—for he purchased the property as a stranger—in conciliating the good-will of the people? Is it true, that by perseverance, by forbearance, by deference, in the first instance, perhaps, to the ignorance or prejudices of the people, by kindly feeling, and by evincing determination to effect improvements, he has effected the revolution he contemplated in the country? And has not this been done consistently with the promotion of his own interests? Has not the value of his property improved? Have not his rentals increased? I must say I think that gentleman, by the example he has set, has entitled himself to be regarded as a public benefactor to his country. I honour and respect the motives

which have led him to adopt this course; and I envy him the gratifying reflections of his own conscience. [Colonel Conolly here made an observation to the right hon. baronet.] My hon. and gallant friend says that my statement is strictly correct. My own impression is, that though much may be done by good legislation, by which the foundation at least of social improvement may be laid, yet that the immediate practical improvement of Ireland will be most efficaciously promoted by a combination of the landlords, resident and absentee, to follow the example of Lord G. Hill, to improve their own property, and to increase its productiveness, while at the same time they conciliate the affections and good will of those who stand towards them in the relation of tenants. Now, the complaints with reference to the state of the land and of the people of Ireland are not now made for the first time. For the last hundred years these complaints had been reiterated. Dr. Madden, a writer who by his good sense conciliated the esteem of the Earl of Chesterfield, published a treatise in 1737, nearly 110 years ago, in which he thus spoke of the landed proprietors of Ireland:—"Now, as the position of a landlord is the single circumstance which is of the greatest importance and weight, and contributes chiefly to every one's influence and power, let us begin with that as the principal engine we can employ in this useful work, and lay down as the main foundation stone of our little building this first resolution, viz.:—"that, as landlords in this poor kingdom, we will do our utmost in our little spheres to remove the defects and difficulties which we find our people and country, and particularly our own estates and tenants, lie under."

Again he says:—"And yet, to our shame we must confess, that in Ireland our tenants (I speak of the poorest and greatest part of them) have rather huts than houses, and those of our cotters are built, like birds' nests, of dirt wrought together and a few sticks and some straw, and like them are generally removed once a-year, and consequently as migratory, and not so durable, as the carts and waggons of the wandering Tartars. Numbers of them have no chimney, either for want of wood, or skill to build one, but vent the smoke like those of the Hottentots; and if we had a market, as Mr. Beauplon says the Cossacks have, for wooden chimneys ready made, our poor people have not a penny to buy one. As miserable as they look on the outside, the family within are full as wretched, half starved and half clad, so that there is an absolute necessity to lodge them better and use them to warmer cottages and clothing, and a cleaner way of feeding and living, if we would have them cultivate their lands or manufactures to any purpose."

This was written above 100 years ago, but I fear it is too true a description of the habits and habitations of the people in many parts of Ireland at the present time. Of this, however, I have the strongest conviction, that if the landlords of Ireland would consider the condition of the people; if they would imitate the practice in this country with respect to the building of houses for the occupation even of the poorest labourers; if they would enter into a combination the most laudable and honourable in which they could enrol themselves; if they would procure correct information as to the state of the country; if they would resolve to follow that noble example to which I have referred, the relations between rich and poor would be ameliorated, more kindly feelings would be encouraged, and greater confidence in the law would be established, than could be effected by any measures that government or the legislature could adopt. While, therefore, you call on the government to introduce measures, and upon parliament to sanction them, I do hope you will recognize that principle for which I have been contending, that there is a moral obligation incumbent upon the possessor of property, which laws cannot supersede or control, the exercise of which is essential to the well-being and prosperity of the country. I trust that in stating the reasons which have induced the government to introduce this bill, I have said nothing which can by possibility excite or embitter animosities. I have not said one word blaming the representatives of Ireland for the course they have taken. All I can find fault with, therefore, is, that, professing to be anxious for discussion, they have not permitted a continuous discussion on the subject; I think they ought to have permitted us from day to day to proceed with the discussion of the bill. I have no authority whatever to question their exercise of their right; but I must say, I think their occupying two days in the week with Irish motions is calculated to impede rather than to facilitate free discussion. It is now, I think, five weeks since this measure was introduced; I have stated the reasons which induced the government

to interpose it before other measures were proceeded with ; and I do hope, considering the long discussion, the full discussion, the able discussion, which has taken place upon it, that the representatives of Ireland will now feel that they have done their duty, and will permit the sense of the House to be taken upon this preliminary stage. I wish to avoid a word which could pique them into a further continuance of the debate ; I find no fault with them ; I do not mean to question the exercise of their discretion ; but I do hope, considering that this is but a preliminary discussion, and considering what measures are pending of the utmost importance to Ireland, that they will yield to that which I believe is the prevailing opinion on all sides of the House—the prevailing sentiment of those who would most cordially concur with them in resisting the further progress of this bill—that they will feel they have performed their duty to their country, and will at length permit the sense of the House to be taken upon this preliminary stage of the bill.

Bill read a first time.

## PENSIONS TO VISCOUNT HARDINGE AND LORD GOUGH.

MAY 4, 1846.

The House went into committee on the above subject, and her Majesty's message having been read relative thereto—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said : Mr. Speaker, it has been my duty so recently, on two separate occasions, to attempt to do justice to the distinguished services and merits of the officers who are the immediate subjects of these messages from the Crown, and not only to them, but to all the officers and men, European and native, who served under their command, that I conceive it would be an unwarrantable trespass on the time of the House, if, on this third occasion, I were to call the attention of the House specially to the distinguished services they have rendered in the campaign on the banks of the Sutlej. On those occasions, the House, by an unanimous vote, assented to the resolutions which I had the honour of proposing. The House gave a convincing proof how deeply it felt the extent and the value of those services, by the ready and unanimous assent which it accorded to the resolution, that a vote of thanks should be given to those distinguished officers ; and I allude to the recorded vote of the House as a reason why I should not again attempt to describe their actions, rather than venture to recapitulate them. But, Sir, this message from the Crown not only alludes to the triumphant services of Viscount Hardinge and of Lord Gough in the late victorious campaign of the Sutlej ; but it also states that her Majesty has been graciously pleased to recommend this House to adopt such measures as will enable her Majesty to confer upon them some signal mark of her favour for their distinguished services upon other occasions. Perhaps, then, the House will permit me to allude to those services which Viscount Hardinge and Lord Gough have performed for their country in other campaigns than the recent one upon the banks of the Sutlej. Her Majesty has been graciously pleased, in return for all those services, to confer the honour of the British peerage on Viscount Hardinge and Lord Gough ; and her Majesty now invites the House of Commons to make the provision usually made on similar occasions. I find it necessary, therefore, to state to the House, not merely the services performed by those officers on the late occasions, but those also by which, on former ones, they have sustained the honour and glory of the British name, and the interests of their country. It is now forty-eight years since my noble, gallant, and distinguished friend, Viscount Hardinge, entered the British service ; and in the course of his long military career it has been the good fortune of my gallant friend to be present at numerous actions in the Peninsula—at Roleça, Vimiera (where he was wounded), and, under the command of that most gallant, distinguished, and lamented officer, Sir John Moore, during the retreat to Corunna, and at the battle of Corunna. At the battle of Corunna, at an early period of his life, Captain Hardinge was near Sir John Moore when that gallant officer received his death-wound upon the field. Of Lord Hardinge it is said, by the eloquent historian of the Peninsular campaign, when describing the battle of Corunna, that Captain Hardinge, a staff officer, who was near Sir John Moore, attempted to take off his sword, part of the belt of which had entered the deep wound



in his shoulder made by the cannon shot by which he was struck; that Captain Hardinge proposed to Sir John to unbuckle the sword, that the torment it contributed to cause might be relieved; but that Sir John Moore stopped him with this affecting speech, "It is as well as it is. I had rather it should go out of the field with me." The historian adds that, in this manner, so becoming a soldier, Sir John Moore was borne from the field, refusing to part with his sword in the moment of death. After the battle of Corunna, Sir H. Hardinge was present at the passage of the Douro, at the battle of Busaco, in the lines of Torres Vedras, at the battle of Albuera, at the three sieges of Badajoz, at the siege and capture of Ciudad Rodrigo, at Salamanca, at Vittoria, where he was severely wounded, at Pampeluna, at the battles of the Pyrenees, at Nivelle, at Nive, and at Orthez. The House will remember that my gallant friend was at Ligny, two days before the battle of Waterloo, and he was only prevented from taking his share in that great action by the severe wounds he received at the battle of Ligny. This House cannot forget what a distinguished part my gallant friend took in the battle of Albuera; and it is possible that he learned in that action what confidence could be justly placed in the desperate valour of British soldiers. It is probable even that the recollection of the battle of Albuera, and of the change in the fortunes of that day, accomplished chiefly through the valour of the British infantry, may have induced my gallant friend to persevere under all discouragements in his latter and equally glorious battles, and to place a just and never disappointed confidence in the enduring valour of the British troops. The same gallant historian to whom I have referred, speaking of the battle of Albuera, states that there were many circumstances which might have made the most gallant men in the British army despond, and, referring to a period of the fight when an attack was made upon a French division posted on an eminence formidable for the purpose of defence, he says—"Myers was killed; Cole himself, and Colonels Ellis, Blakeney, and Hawkshawe, fell, badly wounded, and the whole brigade, 'struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like sinking ships.' 'Suddenly recovering, however,' says Colonel Napier, in strains of sublime military eloquence, 'they closed on their terrible enemy; and then was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights. In vain did Soulé by voice and gesture animate his Frenchmen; in vain did the hardest veterans, extricating themselves from the crowded column, sacrifice their lives to gain time and space for the mass to open out on such a fair field; in vain did the mass itself bear up, and, fiercely striving, fire indiscriminately on friends and foes, while the horsemen hovering on the flanks, threatened to charge the advancing line. Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry. No sudden burst of undisciplined valour; no nervous enthusiasm weakened the stability of their order: their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front; their measured tread shook the ground; their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation; their deafening shouts overpowered the dissonant cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd, as foot by foot, and with a horrid carnage, it was driven by the incessant vigour of the attack to the furthest edge of the hill. In vain did the French reserves, joining with the struggling multitude, endeavour to sustain the fight; their efforts only increased the irremediable confusion, and the mighty mass, at length giving way like a loosened cliff, went headlong down the ascent."

This is a description worthy of the scene; a description that could only have been written by a man of great eloquence, and of great experience in the art of war. But the historian proceeds:—"The rain flowed after in streams discoloured with blood, and 1,500 unwounded men, the remnant of 6,000 unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill."

Sir, it was the recollection of such an exploit, it was the experience of such desperate valour, that, I have no doubt, induced Sir H. Hardinge and Sir H. Gough never to despond, whatever might be the disparity of numbers, and the skill and valour of their opponents; but, relying on the energy of the British infantry they had under their command, they felt assured of the ultimate success of their arms. So much for the services of my gallant friend Sir H. Hardinge. As I said before, he has now completed forty-eight years of military service. The career of that other gallant officer whom her Majesty has elevated to the British peerage has not been less distinguished. For fifty-two years has Lord Gough served in the British army; and no one would have supposed from the vigour, the energy, and the heroism of

his conduct, that fifty-two years of active service could have passed over his head. Sir Hugh Gough was at the capture of the Cape of Good Hope, at the attack on Porto Rico, and at the capture of Surinam. During the Peninsular war he commanded the 87th regiment at Talavera, where he was severely wounded; he was present at Barossa, at Vittoria, at Nivelles, where he was also severely wounded; at the sieges of Cadiz, and at Tarifa. During the period of European peace, he had still an opportunity of distinguishing himself in his country's service—an opportunity he never neglected. He commanded the British army at Canton, and directed nearly all the operations in China. He was with the right wing of the army of Gwalior, which fought and gained the battle of Maharajpore. These are the services rendered by that gallant officer previous to the late campaign on the Sutlej, where he was Commander-in-chief of the army. It would be presumptuous in me to attempt to do justice to his signal services. I believe he is known to the British army as a man of the most heroic valour, and that his valour and skill inspire confidence in all those whom he commands. I will not speak merely of his valour and his skill: these are admitted by all who are acquainted with the history of our Peninsular and Indian wars. But I must take this opportunity of placing upon record an instance of his devotion to the service of his country, which he, probably, little thought would ever be mentioned within the walls of parliament, but which I conceive to be at least as honourable to him as any services he has rendered in the field. After the termination of the Chinese campaign, Lord Gough was nominated to the command of the forces in Madras. It was thought expedient, at a period subsequent to his nomination to this command, that the military and civil command should be united in the hands of one person—that person having the advantage of previous personal communication with her Majesty's servants; Lord Tweeddale was selected for the government of Madras; and, as I have said, it being thought desirable in the circumstances in which that presidency was then placed to unite the military and civil commands, Lord Tweeddale superseded Lord Gough in the military command. That was a severe trial to a British officer—to one who had just been victorious in China. Now, what was the answer returned by Lord Gough to the Commander-in-chief, on its being intimated to him that the public service required the union of the two commands? Many officers would have felt deeply mortified; but I consider the answer of Lord Gough to be so honourable to him, and to set so striking an example of what is the duty of a British soldier under such circumstances as I have mentioned, that I have determined to read to the House the letter written by the gallant officer on that occasion:—

“HEADQUARTERS SHIP ‘MARION,’ OFF NANKIN, *Sept. 15, 1842.*

“My Lord—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your lordship's letter of the 30th of April. However mortifying it may be to me to find myself deprived of the appointment to which I had been so graciously nominated, I beg to assure your lordship that I bow without repining to any measure that may be considered beneficial to the interests of my country. To serve that country in the higher walks of a profession which I entered as a child, I came to India, and especially to China, and I trust your lordship will believe, that while my sovereign considered my services useful, they were, as they ever shall be, freely, and, I hope, energetically rendered; but when they are no longer required, or when the public exigencies, in such an important portion of our foreign possessions as Madras, are deemed to clash with my individual advantage, I hope I may say that I am one of the last men in the army who would not readily sacrifice self-interest. My gracious sovereign's unsolicited nomination of me to the chief command at Madras was received by me with thankfulness; and whenever for the furtherance of her Majesty's service it became expedient to place another in that situation, whether in a single or conjoint capacity, I should not have wished my private interests to stand in the way of the public good. That I feel rather disappointed I cannot deny; but I am not the less grateful to my sovereign for her gracious kindness towards me, or the less sincerely and warmly thankful to your lordship for the renewed proof of kind consideration which your letter conveys. With the earnest and anxious prayer that the union of the civil government and military command at Madras may fully meet the expectations of the government—I have, &c.

“H. GOUGH, Lieutenant-general,  
“Commanding Expeditionary Land Force.”

This, in my opinion, is one of the most creditable letters ever written by a military man; and proved, I think, that the writer was worthy of a higher trust than that of commander at Madras. I trust that these instances of apparent self-sacrifice and of devotion to the true interests of the military service will ever meet with their just rewards; and though Sir Hugh Gough, when he wrote that letter, never contemplated that a consequence of this might be his appointment to the chief command in India, yet I rejoice that such a noble devotion to the public service was followed by a reward to which he has proved himself to be fully entitled. Having thus attempted briefly to recount the services rendered by these distinguished men previous to the late campaign, I have said enough to show that the proposition which I shall submit to the House is not only justified by recent services, but by a long career of military exertion and glory. The proposal which I shall make may not be one commensurate with their merits, but I feel it to be of the utmost importance, that a proposal so made should command the unanimous assent of the House. I am perfectly certain that it would be more agreeable to my gallant friend, Lord Hardinge, and to that other distinguished officer, whose personal acquaintance I have not the honour to enjoy—I am sure that it would be more acceptable to their feelings that the minister of the Crown should make a proposition so reasonable and moderate that it should command universal assent, rather than one that might possibly lead to controversy. I shall propose that the annual sum of £3,000 be granted to her Majesty out of the consolidated fund, to be settled in the most beneficial manner on Lord Hardinge and the two next surviving heirs male of his body. I shall propose also to follow precedents, which I think it is desirable to observe in respect to the rewards of these military services, in order that there may not be the possibility of inviting a contrast. Adopting, then, these precedents as far as practicable, I shall propose that the sum of £2,000 a year be granted to Lord Gough and to the two next surviving heirs male of his body. I have reason to believe—and it would not be proper to withhold the knowledge from this House—that the East India Company, most wisely and properly, in my opinion, are anxious to mark their sense of the services rendered by Lord Hardinge and Lord Gough, by making every provision for those distinguished men which the charter of the India Company enables them to do. I believe, that without some legislative sanction, and the assent of the Crown, the East India Company cannot make any provision or allowances to the heirs of any one who has rendered services in India; but the India Company are most desirous of making a liberal provision for Lord Hardinge and Lord Gough during their lives. In that case, though on the present occasion I shall feel it my duty to propose the vote in the usual form—namely, that provision be made from the 28th of April for Lord Hardinge and Lord Gough and their two next heirs male, yet in case the India Company should take that course which would be most becoming to them, and consistent with that liberality which they have always evinced in rewarding services rendered in India, and should make provision for life for those two distinguished individuals, then it will be perfectly competent in the House, during the progress of the bill, to permit the East India Company to have the honour of allotting to Lord Hardinge and Lord Gough for their lives whatever provision the company may deem suitable to their brilliant services; and in that case the grant of the House of Commons, so far as those two illustrious individuals are concerned, would not take place. I am most anxious that there should be a deep conviction on the part of the House that the proposal I make is so moderate as to command unanimous assent. After the account which I have given of the services of these two distinguished and gallant individuals, I believe that such will be the feeling of the House; and being fully confident in the moderation of my proposal, and in the liberality of the House of Commons, I now move—"That the annual sum of £3,000 be granted to her Majesty, out of the consolidated fund of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the said annuity to commence from the 28th day of April, 1846, and to be settled in the most beneficial manner upon Lieutenant-general Henry Viscount Hardinge, and the two next surviving heirs male of the body of the said Henry Viscount Hardinge."

Vote agreed to, as was also a vote of £2,000 to Lord Gough, and the House resumed.

## CORN IMPORTATION BILL.

MAY 4, 1846.

On the question that the speaker do leave the chair, for the House to go into Committee on the above bill,—Lord George Bentinck moved as an amendment, “That the Speaker leave the chair on that day three months.”

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, I shall, in the first place, notice that part of the speech of the noble lord, the concluding part, which referred to the position and circumstances of Ireland; and I certainly did little expect, after the information that has been laid upon the table by her Majesty's government, not an unfair selection of facts as the noble lord states, but the full and entire reports received from the scarcity commissioners appointed by government—I say, Sir, that I did not expect any hon. gentlemen would now rise in this House and deny the allegations contained therein. I know very well that scarcity is not universal in that country. I know that there are parts of that country in which the disease which has generally attacked the potato either does not exist at all, or at least does not exist to that calamitous extent which prevails in other parts; and you may find gentlemen living in the immediate vicinity of those more favoured parts, writing letters with the view of showing that there is, after all, no great rise in the price of these necessary articles of food. You may multiply those letters from particular counties, which, as far as they go, appear to give a contradiction to the facts which we have laid before you. Nevertheless, it is, I say, impossible to doubt the statement that there does exist in that country great scarcity—that their does exist much disease, growing out of that scarcity of food, in many parts to almost an unparalleled extent. The remedy which we are now applying to those evils is the purchase of food in order to provide subsistence to a population who would otherwise be subject to the most frightful privations. Out of what source do those means come? Is there a great fund at the disposal of government applicable to the purchase of food for the subsistence of the Irish people? No; the source from which these purchases have been made is the taxation of the united kingdom. The noble lord says, “Why, there were six hundred tons of potatoes brought out of Ireland for the supply of Liverpool and Bristol.” Is it the remedy the noble lord would propose, to interrupt this natural supply of food for this country, by purchasing it out of the money raised by the general taxation of the kingdom? The noble lord charges us with indifference, because we did not purchase from this stock which has been sent for the ordinary supply of the people of this country. There have been, no doubt, reductions of prices in some of the Irish markets; but how has this been caused? Why, because we have been purchasing large quantities of Indian meal, and thereby checking the price of potatoes by the supply we have kept up of that article—an article of food purchased by us, with the public money. I refer, Sir, to the several reports which have been laid upon the table; and I ask the noble lord whether he thinks that there is a universal conspiracy on the part of these gentlemen in Ireland to misrepresent the condition of that country? whether he thinks they have conspired to state that famine and disease do exist, when the real fact is there is no foundation for such assertions? We have not withheld from the knowledge of this House all the information that has reached us; and the House will judge whether we are justly chargeable with any exaggeration of facts for the purpose of facilitating the passing of the Corn-law measure. The noble lord says, that we are countenancing delusion. Now, that is rather a heavy charge. How came the noble lord himself to say, that he would consent to an extraordinary measure, namely, that he would permit for a period the importation of food into Ireland free of duty? Did not the noble lord give a willing consent to the adoption of such a course? Well, then, you believe that that would be a remedy for the evils of Ireland; and yet, the noble lord believes that there is no foundation for stating that famine exists in Ireland. Well, then, if that be so, what could induce the noble lord to consent to such an extraordinary measure as allowing the importation of foreign corn and provisions into Ireland free of duties? If it is the duty of the legislature to undeceive the people, and not to countenance delusions, it is clearly incumbent on those who, entertaining the same opinions as the noble lord, see no necessity whatsoever for any change in the law, to resist the proposition for such an extraordinary

measure as that. [Lord G. Bentinck: Hear, hear.] I confess I do not quite understand that cheer. This is what the noble lord says—"I believe that the importation of foreign provisions into Ireland, duty free, would be no remedy whatever for the present evil. I believe what the people of Ireland want is the money to purchase that food which I think is abundant; but still I will consent to such a measure for the present."

The noble lord, however, now says that there is no particular necessity in Ireland for any such change in the law. He says—"I do not think that there is any necessity for resorting to extraordinary measures. I think that a resort to extraordinary measures would but have the effect of countenancing the existing delusion, and of keeping up the price of food."

And yet the noble lord is ready to countenance that delusion by permitting the importation of provisions into Ireland duty free. Am I wrong in saying that the noble lord is ready to consent to such a step? And upon what ground? Why, because the Irish members wished it. Well, but they could only have wished it under a strong impression that there was a necessity for such a measure. Among the whole body of Irish members there was such an alarm on account of the scarcity of food in Ireland, that they felt it was necessary, in order to procure an adequate supply, to ask for the suspension of the law which imposes duties upon foreign provisions. The noble lord then, it appears, believes that the Irish members, generally, wish for such an extraordinary measure; and he is, therefore, willing to consent to it on this ground. The noble lord at one time thinks that there is a conspiracy to deceive this House; and at another he is willing to trust to the assurances of the Irish members that this scarcity does exist. I was certainly under the impression that the noble lord did feel there was a scarcity of food in Ireland to justify the extraordinary measure to which he had consented, because I perceived that he did not express his willingness to yield in the same way to the opinions of the Irish members, on another subject—those members that are opposed to the passing of the Coercion bill. A case, I considered, was proved—that there was a necessity for the Coercion bill: that case was established against the wishes and the opinions of the majority of the Irish members. Notwithstanding the expression of such opinions, the noble lord refused to oppose that bill. If, however, the noble lord really thinks that there is no cause for these statements as to scarcity in Ireland, and that nevertheless he is willing to consent to the extraordinary measure of suspending the law which imposes duties upon foreign provisions imported into Ireland, in deference to the opinions and the wishes of the Irish members,—why, in like manner, did he not conform to the opinions expressed by the same members in reference to the Coercion bill? Why did he permit himself "to countenance the delusion which was calculated to raise the price of food, and to aggravate the evils of that country?" Sir, you will find that this Irish case will not be limited to this year. The temporary suspension of the law, as far as Ireland is concerned, is not sufficient. You will find in the course of this year a much smaller quantity of land dedicated to the growth of potatoes than at any former year. This has arisen—first, from the unwillingness of the farmers to let their land on consacre, for fear of not receiving their rent for it; and, secondly, from the apprehensions in the minds of the cottier and peasant, that the same disease would affect the potato in this year that so generally prevailed in the crops of last year. You must, therefore, calculate upon the probability of this pressure extending beyond the month of August next; and next year we will have to provide again for a deficient supply. So far, then, as Ireland is concerned, I absolutely deny that there has been any exaggeration on the part of the government. I peremptorily deny that there has been anything like intentional exaggeration on our part for the purpose, as has been alleged, of facilitating the passing of the present measure. A government that sees the progress of this disease, and is responsible for the well-being and protection of the people from famine and scarcity, has highly important and responsible duties to perform, which, if neglected, and those reasonable precautions not adopted, intolerable evils must consequently be felt which might have been obviated. Universal condemnation would be naturally pronounced against the government that should run that risk, and neglect these reasonable precautions. And this censure is now lavished upon us by the noble lord and his party for what they call our superfluous precautions. With ten

times more force and ten times more justice would this censure be applicable, if, presuming these reports before us to be true, we had neglected the precautions of increasing the supply of food in Ireland. The noble lord says, I stated the other night that in the course of this discussion, the opinion which I had entertained upon the subject had undergone a change, and that those restrictions which I some time since thought impolitic, I now believe to be unjust. Sir, I adopt and deliberately repeat that statement. I do believe the restrictions upon the importation of food to be inconsistent with justice and sound policy. The noble lord may have a right to blame me for making that discovery at so late a period, and may say that I ought to have seen this injustice at least three or four years ago. I admit, Sir, that those who have intuitive perception to tell them that which is right in respect to matters relating to commercial policy—I admit, Sir, that those who, after patient and deliberate consideration, adopt at once the right course, are much more entitled to the credit attending such a course of policy, than others who, at a later period of life, adopt their sentiments. But it is the duty of those who have reason to change their opinions, to have the manliness to come forward and own their convictions. Sir, I think it is dishonour for a man, after being convinced upon a particular subject, to endeavour to gain credit for consistency, by being either unwilling or afraid to admit the change. I admit that this alteration in my opinions may disentitle me to the noble lord's confidence; but I must recollect that the question for the country is not a personal one. It is not a question as to what period a man has changed, or ought to change his political opinions. The real question is—are these measures consistent with justice and sound policy? That, Sir, is the only question which we have now to consider. If you blame me for not having discovered sooner the necessity of such a measure as the present, you may say that this circumstance disentitles me to your confidence; but that will not enable you to escape the necessity of arguing this question on account of personal imputations. Are these restrictions politic and just? I have no hesitation in saying, I do not think they are consistent with justice. But the noble lord says, I ought now to state the grounds for this opinion. I had no reason to believe that this discussion would have come on to-night. I thought that it was to be taken upon the third reading; and I had not the slightest reason to suppose that the noble lord, in the exercise of his discretion, would have made a demand on me at any period of this discussion for the grounds of my opinion. But, as the noble lord requires me to do so, I will assign the grounds upon which, after mature consideration, after hearing these debates, and even after having listened to the speeches of the noble lord himself, I have come to the conclusion that these restrictions are not politic, and are not consistent with justice. I do not think that you can defend any restrictions upon the importation of food—that is, to increase the natural price of food by legislative intervention, except on some great public reasons connected with the public good. I think, Sir, the presumption is against those restrictions. The natural presumption, I think, particularly in the House of Commons, which has already adopted the principle of freedom from restriction in respect to almost all other articles of importation, is in favour of the unrestricted importation of food. Consistency on the part of the House requires that the same principle that has been applied to almost all other articles of foreign produce shall be applied in like manner to food, unless you can, for some reason connected with the general and the permanent welfare of the country, establish a distinction between food and all other articles of produce. You must, in fact, show that it is for the general interest of the country that these restrictions should continue. Sir, it is because I cannot with truth allege that if you establish free trade in corn, you will probably become dependent upon foreign nations for your supply of the necessaries of life—it is because I do not believe that the rate of wages varies directly with the price of food—it is because I cannot persuade myself that with respect to the intelligent farmers, it can be considered that this protection is necessary to agricultural prosperity—it is because I cannot establish these facts, I have come to the conclusion that the natural presumption in favour of unrestricted importation ought to prevail, and therefore that it is unjust to continue these legislative restrictions upon food. I feel it absolutely incumbent on me to maintain one or other of these propositions. I have listened to the argument that in this country, with a very heavy taxation, there was a reason for the continuance of the duties upon the import of corn. Upon mature consideration and reflection, I believe that

argument to be totally without foundation. I believe it is impossible to assign the high rate of taxation as a valid reason for continuing the duties. I believe it to be illogical to contend that because the great mass of the community are heavily taxed and necessarily heavily taxed, in respect to the consumption of many of their commodities, therefore that is a good reason why they should also be taxed in the price of their corn. I do believe that, also, by increasing the resources from which you draw your supply of food, by bringing it from the United States, from Odessa, from the Baltic; by increasing the number of countries in different latitudes which can feel an assurance that the British market will be open to them, and that there will be no operation of a sliding-scale to exclude their produce; you will receive supplies from so many sources, that dependence on any one nation will be impossible. I cannot contend that the probability of dependence upon foreign nations constitutes a reason for maintaining the Corn-laws. Look now at the different classes of the community. Take, first, the manufacturing population. Is it just towards them to continue these laws? Can we maintain, by argument, that the great mass of that population which depends for the means of purchasing its subsistence upon daily labour, and are employed in manufactures—can we contend that they are interested in the maintenance of these laws? If you tell me that the maintenance of these laws will ensure them a more abundant supply of corn at a low price—not this year, or the next, but taking the average of a series of years—that the maintenance of these restrictions will ensure the abundant supply of corn at a lower, or, if you will, at an equal price: I admit that is an argument for their continuance; but I do not admit that your argument is well founded; and when I am asked, as I have been continually, what do I calculate the price of wheat hereafter will be, and whether it will not disturb the tithe composition act; and, as the Corn-laws are calculated to bring 56s., do I not calculate it as highly probable that the price of corn hereafter will be 40s.—when I am asked these questions, they afford a strong presumption, that in the minds of those who put them the unrestricted import of foreign corn will have a tendency, if not to reduce the price of food, to prevent any considerable increase of the price? The apprehension that the tithe composition act will be permanently deranged by permitting the free importation of wheat, must proceed on the assumption that the calculations are erroneous, and that wheat hereafter will be at a low price. With respect to the great manufacturing population, can we contend that it is for their interest that the price of wheat should be enhanced by restrictions upon corn? I do not believe that the price of food will be enhanced by the removal of these restrictions—I do not believe the removal of the restrictions will have a tendency to increase fluctuations. I believe, therefore, that the great mass of the manufacturing population will be doubly benefited by the removal of these restrictions; first, by increasing the demand for those manufacturing articles upon which their labour is expended; and, in the next place, by giving them, from the wages which they receive, a greater command over the necessaries and comforts of life. I think that will be the double operation of this repeal in the Corn-laws; and, therefore, as far as that part of the population is concerned, I cannot maintain the continuance of restrictions on the ground of benefit to them. Now, with respect to the community at large, consider the article wheat, and the producers of that article, for whom principally these restrictions are to be maintained, maize being already admitted duty free, there remain only oats and barley, besides wheat, on which the duty falls; and I apprehend there is no such danger of competition, in barley at least, as would lead us to expect a great diminution of the price of barley by increasing the supply from abroad. There remain, then, wheat and oats, and principally wheat, for which the restrictions are maintained. Let us consider what parts of this country, and how much of it, are districts producing wheat. I apprehend that no one will dispute that the wheat plant requires, to ripen it, a considerable heat of the sun; and if you were to divide Great Britain by a line drawn from Inverness to Southampton, I think you will find the wheat-growing districts to be, to a considerable extent, to the eastward of that line. I do not mean to say, that to the westward of that line, as in Somersetshire and Shropshire, you will not find wheat-growing districts; but, speaking generally, both in Scotland and England, you will find the wheat-growing districts to be to the eastward of a line drawn from Inverness to Southampton. I say, then, that all that portion of the country which lies to the westward of the line has no interest in the restrictions on the importation.

of wheat. I do not apprehend that the agricultural portion of Lancashire is at all interested in maintaining the restrictions on the importation of wheat; and my belief is, that the wheat-growing districts of this country are, comparatively speaking, a particular portion of this country, on account of its exposure on the eastern coast, and freedom from the humidity of the western coast; and that with respect to a great portion of this country—nearly half of it—it would be difficult to show that the agricultural interest gains any advantage from a law which increases the price of food. I think the noble lord himself read me a pretty strong lesson the other night, to show that Ireland is not much interested in the continuance of these restrictions, because the noble lord on a former night described the position of the Irish farmer to be this. He said that Lord Essex had declared, that a farmer with large capital and much skill, might contend against unrestricted import; but Lord Essex, speaking of farmers without capital and much skill, said it would be difficult for them to contend against unrestricted import; that there are 588,000 farmers in Ireland, and that they will answer the description, speaking generally, as a mass of persons without capital, and certainly without skill. Well then, I ask, what has protection done for them? Is it the fact that there are at this moment 588,000 persons employed in the promotion of agriculture in Ireland, with their families dependent upon them; and that it can be truly asserted of them that they are farmers without capital and without skill? If it can be asserted generally of the farmers of Ireland, as a class, that they are men without capital and skill, can we contend that protection has been for their interest? To make the assertion that they have realized no capital, is a very strong proof that protection has not been for their benefit. Then, with respect to the agricultural labourer. Can we say that protection has operated for his advantage? Ireland is peculiarly agricultural; can it be said that the agricultural labourer has flourished in Ireland? Is it not the case, that in the part of the country where the agricultural labourer most abounds, he has been suffering from scarcity and the pressure of hunger? What is the answer made to our statement of the sufferings of the people of Ireland? "This is nothing extraordinary—this is nothing unusual—this is nothing out of the common course of nature; every year this is the same; there are districts where, every year, the potato crops fail, where it is impossible to make the two ends meet; the potatoes fail in June or early in July, and from that time till the new crop is dug up, the labourer is obliged to subsist upon charity, or whatever means will suffice for the purpose of maintaining life." If that be, as you say, the normal state of the Irish agricultural labourer—if that be his ordinary condition, and therefore we are not justified in an extraordinary remedy—can we contend that protection to agriculture has been greatly for the benefit of the agricultural classes in Ireland? Take it as you will—either that the present is an especial case, and then our special remedies are justifiable; or if, on the other hand, you are correct that there is always prevailing throughout six months in the year, destitution and famine—admitting your allegations to be correct, can you have a stronger impeachment of the state of the law under which this is the condition of the agricultural labourer? I cannot admit, then, that the continuance of these restrictive laws is advantageous to the manufacturing interest, or for the interest of that class in Ireland which is immediately connected with them. With respect to the agricultural class here, I do not deny that this change in the law will be altogether unaccompanied by distress. I cannot deny that so great a change can be made without involving some in distress. I deeply regret it. I wish it were possible to make any change in any great system of law without subjecting some persons to distress; but is it not the fact that the parties who will be most distressed of all, will be those who have neither science, nor skill, nor capital? Is it possible permanently to maintain a law which cannot be shown to be advantageous to the men of science, capital, and skill, but which can only be maintained in order to give the means of subsistence to those who have not science, capital, and skill? Should we be justified in maintaining these laws, and taxing the food of the great body of the community, on the allegation, not that they are necessary for the protection of agriculturists who have science and skill, but that they are necessary for the protection of those who go on adhering to the old system, and have neglected the means of improvement? If you cannot permanently maintain the laws, my firm impression is, that the sooner you make known to the country what is your ultimate decision



the better. I believe that the bulk of the agricultural interest is also of that opinion. I believe that the agricultural interest is desirous of ascertaining the ultimate decision of parliament with respect to the present system. That is my decided opinion. I believe that the agriculturist with capital and with skill, not only derives no advantage from these laws, but is subject to prejudice on account of them. I believe he has no interest in the maintenance of them. I do not deny that in these cases of change, from the absence of capital and from the absence of skill, there might be, and probably must be, some temporary suffering; but what I deny is, that you could found a permanent system of protection upon the necessity of protecting that class; and if you cannot found a permanent system upon that ground—if they are not for the advantage of capital and skill as applied to agriculture, their duration is, I believe, necessarily temporary; and if it be temporary, the sooner a permanent arrangement is made the better. ["Hear!"] The hon. gentleman who interposes may have reason to show why the argument is worthless; but that is the ground on which I entertain the opinion that a real and permanent settlement of these Corn-laws is desirable for the whole community. The noble lord says he wishes that the minister of England would adopt the language of the minister of France as to the advantage of maintaining a territorial aristocracy, considering the existence of a territorial aristocracy as essential to the maintenance of the conservative principle. I am very much disposed to adopt the doctrine of the French minister. I believe it to be of the utmost importance that a territorial aristocracy should be maintained. I believe that in no country is it of more importance than in this, with its ancient constitution, ancient habits, and mixed form of government. I trust that a territorial aristocracy, with all its just influence and authority, will long be maintained. I believe such an aristocracy to be essential to the purposes of good government. The question only is—what, in a certain state of public opinion, and in a certain position of society, is the most effectual way of maintaining the legitimate influence and authority of a territorial aristocracy? and if I thought that the continuance of this protection law was essential to the maintenance of the territorial aristocracy, I should see in that very fact a difficult argument, but still a very strong ground for the maintenance of the protection. I should see remote consequences to be attained, great social advantages to be procured by an apparent departure from the strict principles that govern other branches of commercial policy; but what I doubt is, whether it be the real interest of a territorial aristocracy to attempt to maintain its authority by continuing the restriction on corn. There are certain periods in history when this can be done. The question is at present, will the just legitimate influence of the landed aristocracy be better maintained by consenting to forego this protection, or insisting upon the maintenance of it? My firm belief is, that you will more increase the just influence and authority of that body by now foregoing this protection than by continuing it. No author or statesman has dealt more fully and forcibly on this subject than Burke. And what does he say? Mr. Burke says, that it is absolutely essential that a territorial aristocracy should be maintained in this country; that it has taken the lead in all great measures of reform; and that, on the other hand, it has been the great strength and stay of a conservative government. He says, how is it that the territorial aristocracy of England has maintained this influence? Because, he answers, it has always identified itself with the people; it has never pertinaciously insisted on the maintenance of a privilege when the time for foregoing that privilege had arrived. He draws the contrast between the aristocracy of England, wisely consulting public opinion, relinquishing privilege when the time for the exercise of privilege had gone, and the territorial aristocracy of France, insisting upon the maintenance of privilege long after that period. On a former debate, my hon. friend the member for Dorset compared me—and he thought he was passing a severe sarcasm—I thought it a compliment—he likened me to M. Turgot, and thought I was laying the foundation of revolution in this country by adopting and applying the principles of Turgot. Does my hon. friend not feel that if the doctrines of Turgot had been applied at an earlier period—that if the aristocracy had not insisted on maintaining their privileges—that the revolution of France would not have been precipitated, and that the evils of that eventful period would have been diminished? Does not my hon. friend feel that it was the unjust maintenance of bygone privileges that led to the revolution, rather than the doctrines of Turgot? I infer that the privi-

leges of a territorial aristocracy will not be diminished or its influence destroyed by consenting to a free trade in corn, because I firmly believe, speaking generally, that the aristocracy will sustain no injury from it whatever. I do not believe, as I said before, speaking generally, that the value of land, or the privileges of land, or the influence of land, will be diminished. Of this I am sure, that if it will not, you are establishing for the aristocracy a new claim upon the affection and sympathies of the people by making a sacrifice of your prejudices. If these laws are for the general benefit, it is wise to retain them; but if you entertain in your hearts the consciousness that agricultural prosperity is closely interwoven with your own prosperity—that in this complicated state of society you cannot tolerate, without serious danger to the land, a great and lasting check on our manufacturing prosperity—if you feel that; is it not, I ask, better for the permanent interest of a territorial aristocracy to make this concession freely, and at your own, rather than at the instance of the minister. There are many privileges which the aristocracy had possession of, voluntarily abandoned, and with no loss whatever. Formerly it was one of the privileges of the aristocracy that the land alone should constitute a qualification for a seat in this House. That was an ancient privilege of the aristocracy. You might have urged that the abandonment of that was destructive of a territorial aristocracy—that the constitution and long prescription required that the sole means of entering this House was by a piece of land. You found your law evaded; you found it inefficient for its purpose, and you willingly relinquished it. By relinquishing it, has the interest or influence of the aristocracy been diminished; or has not the timely abandonment of a nominal privilege conferred authority and power, much more than would have been conferred by insisting on an adherence to the ancient law? For two or three months, we have had before us the expectation of this great change. The country has known that, if this law should pass, there will, on the 1st February, 1849, be a duty only of 1s. on the importation of foreign corn. The people are a provident class. Let me ask, has the interest of landed property been affected? There have been farms out of lease. Has there been less demand for them? Is there not a conviction on the part of a tenant about to enter a farm, with capital and skill, that there has not been, for the last ten years, a period when he could enter upon the occupation of land with greater advantage than at present? There must be many gentlemen who have had farms out of lease; they must know whether the offers for them had diminished, and whether there has been a necessity for letting them at reduced rents. I said long ago, that I thought agricultural prosperity was interwoven with manufacturing prosperity; and depended more on it than on the Corn-laws. Continued reflection has confirmed me in that opinion. I believe that it is for the interest of the agriculturist that you should lay a permanent foundation of manufacturing prosperity; and as your land is necessarily limited in quantity, as your population is increasing, as your wealth is increasing, that the true interests of land are co-existent with the manufacturing and commercial prosperity. I see in the continued relaxation of commercial restrictions a new foundation laid for manufacturing and commercial prosperity; and therefore, I look forward to their indirect operation, and I believe you will find the value of land increased with the removal of these restrictions, and with additional opportunities for carrying on extended commerce. I believe that with respect to a great part of the community of this country, there is no direct interest in the continuance of these restrictions; that therefore they could only be maintained at the expense of continued and harassing contest. It is because I believe the interests, direct and indirect, of the manufacturing and agricultural classes to be the same—because I believe they are all interested in the extension of scientific agriculture, that I come to the conclusion that the natural presumption in favour of unrestricted import, ought to prevail; and therefore it is that I think it would be inconsistent with justice, as well as with policy, to continue this prohibition. I have now, Sir, attempted to answer the questions put by the noble lord, and to assign the reasons why, after an extended review of the subject, and of the elements which enter into it, and after the best reflection I can give to the whole matter, I now deliberately repeat what I stated at the outset—that I believe restrictions on commerce to be impolitic and unjust. I have now come, Sir, to that conclusion; and I am sorry it was not fixed in my mind at an earlier period. The noble lord and those who act with him retain their impressions on this question. They have, undoubtedly, a right to act on those

impressions, and I dare say their views may be more just than my own; but it is my duty, even if I should lose their good opinion and their confidence, however sincerely I should deplore it—I still feel it is my duty to avow my opinions, and not to persevere in retaining restrictions which in my conscience I cannot justify. The noble lord has referred to our relations with foreign countries as to commerce, and he has said that the promises which I held out some few months ago have not been fulfilled. Why, considering that this bill is only now going into committee, and considering also the declaration of the noble lord, or his confident prediction that either here or elsewhere the bill will be defeated—that it will never pass into a law—considering, I say, all these facts, I think it would be deemed very precipitate on the part of foreign countries, if they made, as contingent on our acts, the relaxations in their commercial system which the noble lord said I prophesied might take place. But, Sir, at the same time, I must say there are countries which have shown a willingness to follow our example. Since I first declared my opinions on this subject, the commercial system of the two Sicilies has been materially modified. I admit that Sicily is a small country; but still, as I said before, we could not well have expected—considering the little progress we had made with our measures for relaxation—that any great or important change would consequently be made in the commercial system of other countries. With respect to France, the noble lord said, I promised that France would adopt principles of commercial relaxation. Sir, I did not promise any such thing. What I said was this, that I gave credit to the French government for being too enlightened to wish to continue their restrictions upon British manufactured articles; but that I believed the government were controlled in their desires by persons in the two Chambers, who were directly interested in the maintenance of restrictive duties. And, Sir, I added, that I thought ultimately the wishes of the government, backed and supported by the opinions of the enlightened men of France, would, at no remote period, prevail over partial and particular interests, and lead the way to the adoption in France of a better system of commercial laws. I did not promise that a relaxation of the French commercial system would take place immediately; but what I then said, I now believe. I believe, Sir, that in France, and in other countries too, the interests of the great body of consumers will at no remote period be better considered and attended to, and that a system of general relaxation with respect to commerce will ultimately be adopted; and, I believe further, that if you adopt the motto of advancing in commercial freedom, instead of receding, you are likely to diminish the power of that portion of the community in France who have a direct influence in retaining restrictive duties on British manufactures. I know that there are societies formed in France of commercial men for the purpose of promoting a freer system of commercial intercourse; and I believe they will be able to show that the people are not interested in buying bad and dear hardware, bad cottons, and bad linens, instead of having good and cheap articles of that description from this country; and I believe, moreover, they will be enabled to prove that the great mass of the French people would be benefited by a more open system of commercial enterprise. But, Sir, I never promised—knowing, as I do, the strength of the protecting interests in the French Chambers—that France would at once yield to the influence of reason. I am not, however, the less confident that if you set the example, your example will be followed, and will ultimately prevail. The subject will be discussed in France, and after a lapse of time—not at once, not immediately, but when it is understood by the people—a liberal system of commercial policy will be adopted. The same, I believe, will be the case in the United States. There is a movement in the public mind on this subject in almost every country; and the example of England, as it told in favour of restriction, so will it tell in respect to freedom of commerce. What have we to lose by our example? “Why,” says the noble lord, “we are going to take the silk and other manufactures of France and her brandy. Adopt a different course, and let your motion be retrograde—recede from what you have done, and say that you are in the wrong, and you will by so doing countenance in every country in the world the influence of restrictive principles.” The noble lord says we are about to take these manufactures, and also the corn and timber of Prussia, and that we are to get nothing in return; but if we get nothing in return, what do we suffer by the precedence? Upon what principle has the noble lord formed his opinion with regard to the manner in which foreign commercial

transactions are conducted? We shall not get these bad brandies, as the noble lord calls them, and silks and other articles, the productions of France, for nothing; we must give something in return for them. There is no mode by which we can purchase these things except by giving something as an equivalent. Supposing we gave gold for them, would evil ensue? If there has been any diminution in the quantity of gold, it has been caused by supplying the internal wants of the commerce of the country, and not by being remitted in extravagant quantities to other nations for the purpose of buying corn or timber. But I am going to say what will alarm you still more—I wish it had! How do you get your gold? I believe this country will always be able to command a sufficient supply for her own wants; and if France and Prussia will take nothing but gold, that gold can only be procured for your manufactures, and a very good bargain you will make by exchanging your manufactures for it; and therefore, if your allegations are correct, and you do make these purchases with gold, I am not very much alarmed if your export from this country is gold, knowing as I well do from the ordinary transactions of commerce, that no such export will take place as can derange the commercial interests of the empire. The noble lord has, as I before mentioned, talked of our taking the bad silks and the bad brandies of France; but the brandy of France is well known to be a better article than we can procure at home; and I conceive that by promoting the qualified import of it—by giving freer access to the brandy and silks of France, we shall inflict no wound whatever on the commerce of this country; but, on the contrary, enable the consumers of those articles to apply the saving in the price to other and perhaps more useful purposes. I freely admit if France were wise enough to see that she would be benefited by free interchange of commerce, the advantages to all parties would be greater; but if the double benefit cannot be obtained, let us not deny ourselves the benefit of the single one; let us not pay a greater price for inferior articles because we cannot induce France to buy good articles at a low price. If, therefore, there be not an immediate reciprocal advantage, I am perfectly content to rely on the ultimate result of the present course of policy taken by her Majesty's government; and I shall, notwithstanding any temporary obstacles, look forward to the force of the example of England in relaxing her commercial laws upon the principle of restriction held up by other nations; and when the attention of the people of these nations is called to the subject, I retain with confidence the impression that at no remote period these principles will ultimately prevail; and I therefore reiterate to you my advice on this question—that advice which the noble lord has condemned—that you should take for your motto, “Advance, and do not recede in the course of your commercial policy.”

Several divisions took place on the question that the chairman should report progress; Sir R. Peel ultimately consented that the bill should not proceed that night, and at a quarter past one o'clock the House adjourned.

MAY 15, 1846.

In the adjourned debate on the third reading of the Corn Importation bill,

SIR R. PEEL (in reply to some severe and cutting remarks by Mr. Disraeli, who taunted him with inconsistency, and with having deserted his party for the sake of retaining office,) said: Sir, I believe it is now nearly three months since I first proposed, as the organ of her Majesty's government, the measure which, I trust, is about to receive to-night the sanction of the House of Commons; and, considering the lapse of time—considering the frequent discussions—considering the anxiety of the people of this country that these debates should be brought to a close, I feel that I should be offering an insult to the House—I should be offering an insult to the country, if I were to condescend to bandy personalities upon such an occasion. Sir, I foresaw that the course which I have taken from a sense of public duty would expose me to serious sacrifices. I foresaw as its inevitable result, that I must forfeit friendships which I most highly valued—that I must interrupt political relations in which I felt a sincere pride; but the smallest of all the penalties which I anticipated were the continued venomous attacks of the member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli.) Sir, I will only say of that hon. gentleman, that if he, after reviewing the whole of my public life—a life extending over thirty years previously to my accession to office in 1841—if he then entertained the opinion of me which he now professes; if he thought I was guilty of these petty larcenies from Mr. Horner

and others, it is a little surprising that in the spring of 1841, after his long experience of my public career, he should have been prepared to give me his confidence. It is still more surprising that he should have been ready—as I think he was—to unite his fortunes with mine in office, thus employing the strongest proof which any public man can give of confidence in the honour and integrity of a minister of the Crown. Sir, I have explained more than once what were the circumstances under which I felt it my duty to take this course. I did feel in November last that there was just cause for apprehension of scarcity and famine in Ireland. I am stating what were the apprehensions I felt at that time, what were the motives from which I acted; and those apprehensions, though they may be denied now, were at least shared then by those hon. gentlemen who sit below the gangway (the Protectionists.) The hon. member for Somersetshire expressly declared that at the period to which I referred he was prepared to acquiesce in the suspension of the Corn-laws. An hon. member, also, a recent addition to this House, who spoke with great ability the other night, the hon. member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Seymour,) distinctly declared that he thought I should have abandoned my duty if I had not advised that, considering the circumstances of Ireland, the restrictions on the importation of foreign corn should be temporarily removed. I may have been wrong, but my impression was, first, that my duty towards a country threatened with famine required that that which had been the ordinary remedy under all similar circumstances should be resorted to—namely, that there should be free access to the food of man from whatever quarter it might come. I was prepared to give the best proof which public men generally can give of the sincerity of their opinions, by tendering my resignation of office, and devolving upon others the duty of proposing this measure; and, Sir, I felt this—that if these laws were once suspended, and there was unlimited access to food, the produce of other countries, I, and those with whom I acted, felt the strongest conviction that it was not for the public interest—that it was not for the interest of the agricultural party, that an attempt should be made permanently to reimpose restrictions on the importation of food. I could not propose the re-establishment of the existing law with any guarantee for its permanence. As the noble lord says, I had acted with Mr. Huskisson in 1822, 1825, and 1826, in revising the commercial system, and applying to that system the principle of free trade. In 1842, after my accession to office, I proposed a revision of the Corn-laws. Had anything taken place at the election of 1844 which precluded that revision? Was there a public assurance given to the people of this country, at the election of 1841, that the existing amount of protection to agriculture should be retained? ["Yes, yes!"] There was, was there? Then, if there was, you were as guilty as I. What was the assurance given? If it was that the amount of protection to agriculture which existed in 1840 and 1841 should be retained, opposition ought to have been made by you to the revision of that system in 1842. Why was the removal of the prohibition on the importation of foreign meat and foreign cattle assented to? That removal must have been utterly at variance with any assurance that the protection to agriculture, which existed in 1840 and 1841, should be retained. Yet that removal was voted by the House by large majorities; and after the bill of 1842, was I not repeatedly asked this question, "Now that you have passed this bill establishing a new Corn-law, will you give a public assurance that to that you will at all times adhere?" Did I not uniformly decline to give any such assurance? I said I had no intention of proposing an alteration of that law at the time when the question was put to me; but I distinctly declared that I would not fetter for ever my discretion by giving such a pledge. These things are on record. It was quite impossible for me, consistently with my own convictions, after a suspension of import duties, to propose the re-establishment of the existing law with any security for its continuance. Well, then, the question which naturally arose was this—shall we propose some diminished protection to agriculture, or, in the state of public feeling which will exist after the suspension of restriction, shall we propose a permanent and ultimate settlement of the question? To be of any avail, it must have been diminished greatly below its present standard, and that diminution, I believe, would have met with as much opposition from the agricultural body as the attempt finally to settle the question. And now, after all these debates, I am firmly convinced that it is better for the agricultural interest to contemplate the final settlement of this question, rather

than to attempt the introduction of a law giving a diminished protection. My belief is, that a diminished protection would in no respect conciliate agricultural feeling; and this I must say, nothing could be so disadvantageous as to give an ineffectual protection and yet incur all the odium of giving an adequate one. What have we been told during this discussion? With scarcely an exception, I have listened attentively to every speech that has been made on this side of the House; and, admitting the talent that has been displayed, I confess they have in no respect altered the conviction upon which I have acted. You tell me it would have been possible, with such support as I should have received, to have continued the existing law; I believe it might have been. As far as the gratification of any personal object of ambition is concerned—(Interruption)—I am perfectly ready to listen to any reply that may be made to my observations, and I think it is hardly fair to attempt to interrupt me by such exclamations, but it has so far succeeded. [The right hon. baronet paused a few moments and then continued.] I am told that it would have been possible to continue this protection; but, after the suspension of it—for I now assume that the suspension would have been assented to on account of the necessities of Ireland—the difficulty of maintaining it would have been greatly increased; because it would have been shown, after the lapse of three years, that, although it had worked tolerably well during the continuance of abundance, or at least of average harvests, yet at the moment it was exposed to the severe trial of scarcity, it then ceased to effect the object for which it was enacted, and that in addition to the state of public feeling with reference to restrictions or imports generally, would have greatly added to the difficulty of maintaining the law. There would have been public proof of its inefficiency for one of the great objects for which it was enacted. But let me say, although it has not been brought prominently under consideration, that, without any reference to the case of Ireland, the working of the law, as far as Great Britain is concerned, during the present year has not been satisfactory. You would have had to contend not merely with difficulties arising from suspension on account of the case of Ireland, but it would have been shown to you, as it now could be shown to you, that the rate of duty has been high on account of the apparent lowness in the price of corn; while that lowness of price has arisen not from abundance in quantity, but from deficient quality. It would have been shown, and conclusively, that there are greater disparities of price in most of the principal markets of this country—between corn of the highest quality and of the lowest, than have ever existed in former periods. It would have been proved that there never was a greater demand than there has been during the present year for wheat of fine quality, for the purpose of mixing with wheat of inferior quality, which forms the chief article brought for sale into our domestic markets. It would have been shown you that had there been free access to wheat of higher quality, than they have assumed, the whole population of this country would for the last four months have been consuming bread of a better quality. My belief, therefore, is, that in seeking the re-enactment of the existing law after its suspension, you would have had to contend with greater difficulties than you anticipate. Still I am told, "You would have had a majority." I think a majority might have been obtained. I think you could have continued this law, notwithstanding these increased difficulties, for a short time longer; but I believe that the interval of its maintenance would have been but short, and that there would have been, during the period of its continuance, a desperate conflict between different classes of society; that your arguments in favour of it would have been weak; that you might have had no alternative at an early period, had the cycle of unfavourable harvests returned—and who can give an assurance that they would not?—that you might at an early period have had no alternative but to concede an alteration of this law under circumstances infinitely less favourable than the present to a final settlement of the question. The hon. gentleman the member for Dorsetshire said, "We can fight the league with their own weapons;" that is to say, finding that we cannot control by law those measures resorted to by the Anti-Corn-law league, which I cannot defend, and which I very sincerely reprobate were ever resorted to—the establishment of voters in counties, not being naturally voters in those counties—the hon. gentleman said, "We can make ragot votes as well as they; and the landed interest," he said, "by the greater facilities which they possess, would be able to beat

the league." Well, but what a sad alternative is this! What a sad conflict to be carrying on! Even admitting that it would be necessary, and might be done from honest convictions of that necessity, could you do it without destroying the county constituencies? Surely, it is wise to consider the alternative; and, believe me, you who are anxious for the maintenance of the aristocratic system, you who desire, wisely and justly desire, to discourage the infusion of too much of the democratic principle into the constitution of the country, although you might for a time have relied on the fagot votes you created in a moment of excitement, yet the interval would not be long before that weapon would break short in your hands! You would find that those additional votes created for the purpose of combating the votes of the league, though when brought up at the first election, under the influence of an excitement connected with the Corn-laws, they might have been true to your side, yet, after the lapse of a short time, some exciting question connected with democratic feelings would arise, and then your votes and the votes of the league, not being subjected to legitimate influence, would unite, and you would find you had entailed on the country permanent evils; destroying the constitution for the purpose of providing a temporary remedy. It was the foresight of these consequences—it was the belief that you were about to enter into a bitter and, ultimately, an unsuccessful struggle, that has induced me to think that for the benefit of all classes, for the benefit of the agricultural class itself, it was desirable to come to a permanent and equitable settlement of this question. These are the motives on which I acted. I know the penalty to which I must be subject for having so acted; but I declare, even after the continuance of these debates, that I am only the more impressed with the conviction that the policy we advise is correct. An hon. gentleman in the course of this evening, the hon. member for Sunderland (Mr. Hudson,) informed us that he had heard that there was excitement about the Corn-laws; but he undertook to give a peremptory contradiction to that report, for he never recollected any public question being proposed involving such great interests, which, on the whole, was received by all classes concerned—by the manufacturing and by the agricultural classes—with less excitement and with a greater disposition to confide in the wisdom of the decision of parliament. Well, if that be so—if this question is proposed at such a time—[Mr. Hudson: No, no.] I certainly understood the hon. member to make that statement. [Mr. Hudson: I will explain after.] I may be mistaken, and of course I am, if the hon. member says so; but I understood him to say, that so far from there being any undue excitement, he thought that there was much less than could have been expected, and that all parties were disposed to acquiesce in the decision of parliament. [Mr. Hudson: What I stated I believe was this: that there was no excitement in favour of the bill—not that there was a deep feeling on the part of the agriculturist against it, but that there was no public excitement in its favour.] That varies very little from the expressions I used, and entirely justifies the inference which I drew. If there be no excitement in favour of the Bill, and no strong feeling on the part of the agriculturists against it, it appears to me that this is not an unfavourable moment for the dispassionate consideration by parliament of a subject otherwise calculated to promote excitement on the part of one class, and to cause great apprehension on the part of the other; and the hon. member's statement is a strong confirmation of my belief that it is wise to undertake the settlement of this question when there is such absence of excitement, rather than to wait until a period when unfavourable harvests and depressed manufactures may have brought about a state of things which may render it less easy for you to exercise a dispassionate judgment on the matter. Sir, I do not rest my support of this bill merely upon the temporary ground of scarcity in Ireland. I do not rest my support of the bill upon that temporary scarcity, but I believe that scarcity left no alternative to us but to undertake the consideration of this question; and that consideration being necessary, I think that a permanent adjustment of the question is not only imperative, but the best policy for all concerned. And I repeat now that I have a firm belief that it is for the general benefit of all—for the best interests of the country, independent of the obligation imposed on us by temporary scarcity, it is for the general interest of the great body of the people that an arrangement should be made for a permanent removal of the restrictions upon the introduction of food. I will assign my reasons for that opinion. I take my facts from the opponents of

this measure. I take the speech of the hon. gentleman the member for Oxfordshire—a speech distinguished by all the ability and usual earnestness and research of the hon. gentleman. We shall have no difference respecting our facts, for I shall take them from the opponents of the measure. The only question is as to the just inference to be drawn from these facts. The hon. gentleman said—"Allowing that the facts and figures which we have produced for the last thirty years are correct, then I find that there has been a great increase in trade—that there has been a cheapening of commodities; but there has been an improvement in the social condition of the great masses of the people." Now, all of you admit that the real question at issue is the improvement of the social and moral condition of the masses of the population; we wish to elevate in the gradation of society that great class which gains its support by manual labour—that is agreed on all hands. The mere interests of the landlords—the mere interests of the occupying tenants, important as they are, are subordinate to the great question—what is calculated to increase the comforts, to improve the condition, and elevate the social character of the millions who subsist by manual labour, whether they are engaged in manufactures or in agriculture? What, then, says the hon. member for Oxfordshire? Take his statements to be correct; and they suggest matter for grave consideration. Here is a country in which wealth has increased—in which trade has increased—in which commodities have been cheapened; "But," said the hon. gentleman, "the social condition of the people has not been raised; I have tried it by every test by which I can determine the fact, and the conclusion I come to is that it has not." If that be so, is it not a formidable state of things? If increased wealth and enjoyment—if increased trade and cheaper commodities have not given the people more contentment, have not elevated them in the moral scale—if the moral and social improvement of those who form the foundation and platform of society has not advanced, is that not a subject of serious reflection? He says, "I look to the state of crime—it has increased; I look to the great articles, not of consumption, but of luxury, which have become necessities; I look to sugar, to tea, and to other articles of a similar nature, and I find there has been no corresponding increase of consumption." He says—"I draw my inferences from the facts and the statistics of the last thirty years." Well, let us go back to the period at which the thirty years commence. That is the year 1815. Then began the present system of protection to agriculture. You say you have carefully considered this state of things—that you have looked at them for the last thirty years; and you find increased wealth, increased trade, but a deteriorated condition of the people. With what do you compare the condition of the people for the last thirty years? With what preceding period do you institute the comparison? Take any period of the last century. Let us exclude the war; because during the war which began in 1793, there was a great dislocation of capital, and a great derangement of social interest. Our comparison, to take a period of peace similar to that of the last thirty years, must be a period which preceded the French war. We must go to the last century. Take what period you please—take the period from 1700 down to 1791; and now let us compare what was the state of the law when the people, according to your showing, were in a more prosperous condition than during the last thirty years. Let us compare the state of the law at this period, or at any part of this period, as compared with that when protection to agriculture began in 1815. Why, for the first sixty-six years of the last century there was no impediment to the importation of corn. For the first sixty-six years of that century this country was an exporting country. Let me ask you what were the agriculturists of Croatia and Hungary at that time about? Why did they not send us corn? This country was exporting corn at that time—the price of corn was low, and did not exceed 41s. What was the law passed in 1773? Why, foreign corn was admitted at a duty of 6d. when the price was above 49s. 6d.; and under that law, for six years after it was passed, this country was an exporting country. And did agriculture suffer during that period? Why, Sir, there were more enclosure bills passed during that period, when there was a free importation of foreign corn—when it might be brought in at a duty of 6d. if the price exceeded 49s. than ever before. There were not less than 1,560 enclosure bills passed. You say, then, that the condition of the people was comparatively better in point of morality and comfort than since 1815. In 1815, the commencement of the period of thirty years,



this law was passed—that foreign corn should not be imported into England until after the price had arrived at 80s. There was a positive prohibition of foreign corn unless the price arrived at 80s. That was the perfection of protection. Was that to continue? You relaxed it. In 1822, you permitted the importation of foreign corn when the price exceeded 70s. You altered this law again, which the hon. member for Newcastle under Lyme (Mr. Colquhoun) ranks with principles and ancient institutions. By the the law of 1828, you subjected foreign corn when the price was under 64s. to a duty of 23s. 8d.; when it was at 69s. you subjected it to a duty of 16s. 8d.; and that law remained in force till 1842; and it was under the influence of this law, until you altered it in 1842, that you have the admission of the hon. gentleman the member for Oxfordshire, that the social and moral condition of the people has not improved. What, also, did we in 1815? We imposed enormous duties and positive prohibitions upon other articles the produce of foreign countries. At that time the duty upon foreign butter and cheese was 2s. 6d. and 1s. 6d. respectively; we raised it to £1 and 10s. 6d. Therefore, we did in 1815 adopt the principle of strict protection to agriculture; and the hon. gentleman says that he finds crime increased, and the command over comforts and the moderate luxuries which partake of the nature of necessities lessened. He says that is the result of the inspection of thirty years. So much, then, for the condition of the great body of the people. Now I come to the facts of the hon. member for the North Riding of Yorkshire. I heard his speech; I was sorry to observe the indisposition under which he laboured—an indisposition which in no degree prevented the exercise of his intellectual faculties, or prevented him from speaking with his usual clearness and power. I ask you to take the facts of the hon. gentleman since 1815. I am quoting the very expressions he used; the account I am giving of agriculture since that period is not mine, but his. I followed him closely, and took down his account of the condition of agriculture under a state of almost perfect protection. In 1815 you had prohibition of foreign importation till corn exceeded 80s.; and these are the historical annals of the hon. gentleman, the advocate of agricultural protection. In 1816 and 1817, he says, you had severe distress. [Mr. Cayley: In 1815 and 1816.] I think it was after 1815 and 1816—I think it was in 1817, that a speech was made from the throne lamenting the state of society, and the efforts that were made by designing men to take advantage of the distress of the country. It was in 1817 that the Habeas Corpus act was suspended, and the seditious meetings bill was passed. In 1819, the hon. gentleman said, such was the severity of distress, the six acts passed into a law. In 1822, he said, agricultural distress was so intense that a committee was appointed for the purpose of devising a remedy. He said that at that time the price of wheat—of beautiful wheat—was 40s.; that a farmer stated, I think, that where there were 150 persons usually out of employ, there were then 300; and that he had the greatest difficulty, on account of the low price of wheat, in giving employment to the agricultural labourers. From 1822 the hon. gentleman advanced to 1830, and he said that in 1830, on account of the depressed state of agriculture, we had the “Swing” fires. In 1833 agriculture was again so depressed that it was necessary to appoint a committee to consider that distress, and to attempt to devise a remedy. He said that there were thirty-five villages in the north of England with a population of 200,000 persons depending upon their labour, and their wages did not exceed 8s. 8½d. per week, per man. In 1834, he said, the Preston operatives presented a petition to this House, in which they complained of poverty, of ignorance, and of vice. The year 1835, he said, was as bad as the year 1822, and prices were so low that the ordinary employment of agriculture could not be afforded. 1836 and 1837, he said, were years of sudden prosperity; but that came to an end in 1838, and there was prostration and suffering from 1839 to 1842. That is the account which the hon. member gives of the state of agriculture under that protection which was terminated by the bill of 1842. Now, observe what the hon. member also said; he said that there was a constant alternation of high prices and of low prices; and he said, differing from many who concur with him in their vote, that the low prices, though caused by favourable harvests, entailed the greatest suffering upon the agricultural classes, and that in 1822 and 1835, the farmer who had sold his wheat for less than 40s. complained, on account of the lowness of prices, that he could not give the usual employment. That lowness of price did not arise from competition with

foreign corn; there was no foreign corn imported to reduce prices; that low price was caused by competition amongst the home growers of corn. There was a glut of productive harvests, there was no outlet for it, and there was prostration and suffering of the agriculturists in consequence. That is the account which the hon. member gives of the result of high protection, not upon the manufacturing interest, but upon the agricultural; and when he had given that account—when he had detailed those sufferings on the part of the agriculturists, I was surprised to hear the hon. gentleman conclude with a quotation—

“Woodman, spare that tree!”—

I beg pardon, I am afraid I should have to ask the hon. member to supply me with the verse, but the purport of it was that not a bough must be touched; that those whom it sheltered in youth ought to let it remain in their old age; after that account of the consequences of this high protection upon the agricultural interest, I was surprised to hear that advice which the hon. gentleman gave us, not to touch a bough of that tree, under the shade of which agriculture had so long flourished. If he had said—

“Ille et nefasto te posuit die  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 \* agro qui statuit meo  
 Te, triste lignum, te caducum  
 In domini caput immerentia!”—

I think it would have been a more appropriate quotation. But now, is there no exception to be made from this period of thirty years? Did nothing occur at the latter part of that period of thirty years to exempt it from the stigma which the hon. gentleman cast upon the preceding part? There have been three years—1843, 1844, and 1845—during which you have had, from some cause or other, the benefits of plenty and of cheapness. During the last three of these thirty years the average price of wheat a little exceeded 50s.; and let us see whether during that period that censure will apply which applies to the former period—let us see whether, during the last three years, there has been no increase of comfort, no improvement in morality, no abatement of seditious feeling or disaffection. I care not what may be the cause of the abundance which has prevailed during the last three years; you say the cause is not to be attributed to the tariff, but that good harvests have produced abundance. Be it so. But there has been comparative abundance. There has been a less outlay required for the purchase of articles of first necessity. You say there has been a demand for labour on railways. Why, that is an effect, and not a cause. It is on account of your prosperity that you are enabled to apply your capital to internal improvements, causing this demand for labour and giving increased wages; and do you believe if wheat had been at 70s. instead of 50s., there would have been the same stimulus to the application of capital? But grant that the tariff of 1842 had nothing to do with the abatement of price in 1843, 1844, and 1845. I will concede it to you that it is attributable to the favour of Providence—to good harvests. But let us see what has been the result of this abundance. I will take the tests of the hon. gentleman. He says, facts and figures show that there has been no increase of consumption. Now, I will show that during the last three years trade has flourished, capital has accumulated; but that you cannot say of the last three years what you can say of the preceding twenty-seven years—that there has been a deterioration in the social condition of the people. I will first take those articles which enter largely into consumption. I have here a statement of the quantities of certain articles entered for home consumption in the United Kingdom from 1839 to 1841, and from 1843 to 1846, showing the average quantity of each article in each of those periods. In the first three years, when the prices of provisions were high, the average consumption of sugar—for the three years ending in 1841—was 3,826,000 cwt. The average consumption for the last three years, ending the 1st of January, 1846, had increased from 3,826,000 cwt. to 4,346,000 cwt. The average consumption of tea in the first three years was 34,685,000 lb. In the last three years it increased to 42,000,000 lb. The average consumption of coffee during the first three years of high price was 27,941,000 lb. annually; the average consumption of the last three years was 31,883,000 lb. The consumption of cocoa

in the first three years averaged 1,859,000 lb. annually; in the last three years 2,575,000 lb. Take another article, which, though in a smaller degree, enters largely into the consumption of the poor, and which is not a bad test of their comfort. During the first three years the consumption of currants averaged 175,000 cwt.; in the last three years it had increased to 280,000 cwt. I take then the tests of the hon. member for Oxfordshire—the consumption of articles necessary to the comfort of the people; and I show him that comparative plenty has produced this change in the command of the working classes over the smaller luxuries of life. I will next come to a more important point—the state of crime. You have now an official record, presented within a few days, of what has been the state of crime in this country during the last thirty years. Now, what was the state of crime during the first periods of twenty-seven years? From the first record in 1805 down to 1842, when the commitments attained the maximum number hitherto recorded, the increase in crime progressed from year to year, until it had extended to above 600 per cent. In 1843, a change commenced. In that year the number of commitments decreased. Within the last six years, three years of great increase of crime have been followed by three years during which the decrease was so considerable that the number of commitments in 1845 has been reduced to what it was seven years ago. In the three years of high prices, this was the state of crime in each year:—The number of commitments in the first year was 27,187; in the second, 27,760; and in the third, 31,309. During the last three years the number of commitments has been—in the first year, 29,591; in the second, 26,542; and in the third, 24,303. Well, then, I take this other test of criminality and the extension of morality; and I ask whether we can resist the legitimate inference that the comparative cheapness and plenty which have existed during the last three years, have had their effect in producing this diminished criminality? The gentleman who drew up this return says—“The decrease of commitments in England,” for the last three years, “has therefore been general, continued, and extensive, to a degree of which there is no recorded example in this kingdom.”

He says again—“In the sixth class, containing those offences which do not fall within the definitions of the foregoing classes”—violence to the person, and offences against property—“there is a total absence of commitments for seditious riots or sedition.”

A total absence of commitments for these offences! Why, can you have a stronger proof of the improvement of a country, apart from the command of comforts, than the fact that there should have been this progressive diminution in commitments, and a total absence of any commitments for sedition or seditious riots? I say, therefore, comparing the result of the three years when we have had diminished protection to agriculture, and a reduced price of provisions, with the twenty-seven preceding years, the inference is, just that the diminution of crime is attributable to an increased command over those articles which constitute the food of the people. But you say, “As this happy state of things has arisen during the existence of the present Corn-laws—as the present Corn-laws have been co-existent with cheapness and plenty, on what principle do you seek to disturb this happy arrangement? You have proved that, co-existent with the Corn-laws, there have been cheapness and happiness; why, then, do you now come forward to propose their alteration?” Why, if you can show me that those laws were the cause of this happiness and plenty, that would no doubt be a strong and powerful reason for their continuance. But it cannot be denied that, simultaneously with a reduced protection to agriculture, there has been not only no diminution in agricultural improvement, but increased exertions, an increased demand for agricultural products, and increased comfort for the people. As you have proceeded downwards from 1815 to 1842, there has been a corresponding benefit from the abatement of protection. If we could anticipate that the law of 1842 would continue to produce all the advantages to which I have referred, that might be a conclusive reason for adhering to it. But you assert that favourable harvests have occasioned these advantages. Why, what guarantee have you for the continuance of favourable harvests? You have had comparatively favourable harvests for the last three years; and you say then, as a matter of necessity, that we ought to continue this law. Continue the law, say I too, if you can prove that this particular law has been the cause of these benefits. If, however, you say that favourable har-

vests have been the cause, I say then, that that does not constitute any reason for continuing the law. Those who have observed attentively the vicissitudes of the seasons, have remarked that there are cycles of favourable and unfavourable years. There was an unfavourable cycle of years in 1839, 1840, and in 1841, during which time there was great distress. There has been since a favourable cycle of years, during which there has been comparative abundance. But supposing that this cycle of years in which we have had unfavourable harvests should again return, have we, I ask, any security that the law of 1842 will enable us to obtain an ample supply of food? Suppose, also, that, co-existent with those unfavourable harvests, we had also a depressed state of manufactures—shall we then be in a favourable position for making any alteration in the law? Remember how short a time has elapsed since we had the state of Paisley, of Sheffield, and of Stockport, brought under our special notice. Now, if these times should again return, after this interval of comparative happiness, when the contrast of our misery will be considerably heightened by the preceding period of happiness which has prevailed, do you believe it would be possible to maintain in existence a law which leaves a duty of 16s. a quarter upon wheat when it had arrived at the price of 56s.? You may say, “Disregard the progress of public opinion; defy the league; enter into a combination against it; determine to fight the battle of protection, and you will succeed.” My firm belief is—without yielding to the dictation of the league or any other body—[“Oh, oh!”]—yes, subjecting myself to that imputation, I will not hesitate to say my firm belief is, that it is most consistent with prudence and good policy, most consistent with the real interests of the landed proprietors themselves, most consistent with the maintenance of a territorial aristocracy, seeing by how precarious a tenure, namely, the vicissitudes of seasons, you hold your present protection system—I say, it is my firm belief that it is for the advantage of all classes, in these times of comparative comfort and comparative calm, to anticipate the angry discussions which might arise, by proposing at once a final adjustment of this question. I have stated the reasons which have induced me to take the present course. You may no doubt say, that I am only going on the experience of three years, and am acting contrary to the principles of my whole life. Well, I admit that charge—I admit that I have defended the existence of the Corn-laws—yes, and that up to the present period, I have refused to acquiesce in the proposition to destroy them. I candidly admit all this; but when I am told that I am acting inconsistently with the principles of my whole life, by advocating free trade, I give this statement a peremptory denial. During the last three years, I have subjected myself to many taunts on this question, and you have often said to me that Earl Grey had found out something indicating a change in my opinions. Did I not say I thought that we ought not hastily to disturb vested interests by any rash legislation? Did I not declare that the principle of political economy suggested the purchasing in the cheapest market, and the selling in the dearest market? Did I not say, I thought that there was nothing so special in the produce of agriculture, that should exempt it from the application of this principle which we have applied already to other articles? You have a right, I admit, to taunt me with any change of opinion upon the Corn-laws; but when you say, that by my adoption of the principles of free trade I have acted in contradiction to those principles which I have always avowed during my whole life, that charge, at least, I say, is destitute of foundation. Sir, I will not enter at this late hour into the discussion of any other topic. Sir, I foresaw the consequences that have resulted from the measures which I thought it my duty to propose. We were charged with the heavy responsibility of taking security against a great calamity in Ireland. We did not act lightly. We did not form our opinion upon merely local information—the information of local authorities likely to be influenced by an undue alarm. Before I and those who agreed with me came to that conclusion, we had adopted every means—by local inquiry, and by sending perfectly disinterested persons of authority to Ireland—to form a just and correct opinion. Whether we were mistaken or not—I believe we were not mistaken—but, even if we were mistaken, a generous construction should be put upon the motives and conduct of those who are charged with the responsibility of protecting millions of the subjects of the Queen from the consequences of scarcity and famine. Sir, whatever may be the result of these discussions, I feel severely the loss of the confidence of those from almost all of whom

I heretofore received a most generous support. So far from expecting them, as some have said, to adopt my opinions, I perfectly recognize the sincerity with which they adhere to their own. I recognize their perfect right, on account of the admitted failure of my speculation, to withdraw from me their confidence. I honour their motives, but I claim, and I always will claim, while intrusted with such powers and subject to such responsibility as the minister of this great country is intrusted with, and is subject to—I always will assert the right to give that advice which I conscientiously believe to be conducive to the general well-being. I was not considering, according to the language of the hon. member for Shrewsbury, what was the best bargain to make for a party. I was considering first what were the best measures to avert a great calamity, and, as a secondary consideration, to relieve that interest which I was bound to protect from the odium of refusing to acquiesce in measures which I thought to be necessary for the purpose of averting that calamity. Sir, I cannot charge myself or my colleagues with having been unfaithful to the trust committed to us. I do not believe that the great institutions of this country have suffered during our administration of power. The noble lord (Lord J. Russell) says he hopes that the discussions which have threatened the maintenance of amicable relations with the United States will be brought to a fortunate close. Sir, I think I can appeal to the course which we have pursued, against some obloquy, some misconstruction, some insinuations, that we were abandoning the honour of this country—I think I can appeal to the past experience of this government, that it has been our earnest desire, by every effort consistently with the national honour, to maintain friendly relations with every country on the face of the globe. This principle, so long as we are entrusted with the management of public affairs, will continue to influence us in respect to the settlement of our unfortunate differences with the United States. Sir, if I look to the prerogative of the Crown—if I look to the position of the Church—if I look to the influence of the aristocracy—I cannot charge myself with having taken any course inconsistent with conservative principles, calculated to endanger the privileges of any branch of the legislature, or of any institutions of the country. My earnest wish has been, during my tenure of power, to impress the people of this country with a belief that the legislature was animated by a sincere desire to frame its legislation upon the principles of equity and justice. I have a strong belief that the greatest object which we or any other government can contemplate should be to elevate the social condition of that class of the people with whom we are brought into no direct relationship by the exercise of the elective franchise. I wish to convince them that our object has been so to apportion taxation, that we shall relieve industry and labour from any undue burden, and transfer it, so far as is consistent with the public good, to those who are better enabled to bear it. I look to the present peace of this country; I look to the absence of all disturbance—to the non-existence of any commitment for a seditious offence; I look to the calm that prevails in the public mind; I look to the absence of all disaffection; I look to the increased and growing public confidence on account of the course you have taken in relieving trade from restrictions, and industry from unjust burdens; and where there was dissatisfaction I see contentment, where there was turbulence I see there is peace; where there was disloyalty I see there is loyalty; I see a disposition to confide in you, and not to agitate questions that are at the foundations of your institutions. Deprive me of power to-morrow, you can never deprive me of the consciousness that I have exercised the powers committed to me from no corrupt or interested motives—from no desire to gratify ambition, or attain any personal object; that I have laboured to maintain peace abroad consistently with the national honour, and defending every public right—to increase the confidence of the great body of the people in the justice of your decisions, and by the means of equal law to dispense with all coercive powers—to maintain loyalty to the Throne, and attachment to the constitution, from a conviction of the benefit that will accrue to the great body of the people.

The question that the bill be now read a third time was, after some further discussion, put and carried by a majority of 98.

## SIR R. PEEL'S EXPLANATION.

JUNE 19, 1846.

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Mr. Speaker, in rising Sir, to move the Order of the Day for resuming the debate on the bill for the prevention of murder in Ireland, I deeply regret that it should be necessary for me to obstruct, even for a short time, the progress of public business by any explanation of a personal nature. I deeply regret that it should be necessary for me to avail myself of the privilege (perhaps a doubtful one, as I have spoken in the course of the debate,) of making any observations upon the motion for reading the Order of the Day; but, Sir, I greatly doubt whether there be any gentleman, however deeply impressed with the importance of proceeding with the public business, however he may regret the obstruction of that business by personal explanations, however rigid his adherence to the forms of this House—I greatly doubt whether there be any member who now hears me, in whose estimation I should not suffer were I not to avail myself of the earliest opportunity of noticing that which took place in this House on Monday last.

I thank the House, at least the great majority of the House, for their ready acquiescence in my appeal to them to suspend their judgment upon the accusations which were directed against me until they had the opportunity of hearing my defence. There was on the part of this House a general and a generous acquiescence in the justice of that appeal. They felt, Sir, that I must labour under no small disadvantage in being called upon to answer accusations which might have been preferred at any time within the last fifteen years, when the means of defence were more within my reach, and the opportunities of elucidating the whole matter were greater than they can be after the lapse of so many years. I little thought that I should have been called upon in the year 1846, to answer accusations connected with the transactions of 1825, 1827, and 1829. There have been great political conflicts and great political excitement since that period. Since the first period—since 1825—there has been the severance from Mr. Canning; the formation of the government of Lord Goderich; the union of the friends of Mr. Canning with the Duke of Wellington and myself in 1828; the separation from us of those friends of Mr. Canning in the same year, on matters totally unconnected with the reputation or character of Mr. Canning. Then followed the fierce conflicts of 1829, when I felt it my duty to propose the adjustment of the Catholic question. In 1830, the government of the Duke of Wellington—the combination of parties against that government, and the loss of power by the Duke of Wellington, and those who held office under him; then followed the government of Lord Grey, and the severe conflicts of reform; of the dissolution of the government of Lord Melbourne in 1834; and the formation of that government over which I presided in 1835, attempting to conduct the affairs of this country by a minority of this House for about three months, when I yielded to the right hon. gentlemen opposite; and the formation of their government in 1836 ensued. Surely after such a series of party contentions, I was justified in presuming that the events of 1825, 1827, and 1829, so far as they could be the subject of crimination against me, were buried in oblivion; and many years ago every document connected with those events had been sent to a distance from London, in the full confidence that it would not be necessary to resort to them for any purpose of explanation or defence. When the speech to which I have referred was made on Monday night, I had not the means of access to a single paper; occupied as I was by urgent public duties, I was unable to repair to the place of their deposit; the private secretaries by whose aid the correspondence of that period was conducted, have passed away; the whole of the correspondence had been sent to my country residence in Staffordshire. It has been examined by those who were no parties to the conduct of it, and who have brought to London a confused and complicated mass of documents, from which I have for the last three days been attempting to collect the materials for my vindication from charges directed against my veracity and honour. Sir, when I heard those charges, I had a perfect conviction that they were unfounded. I listened to them with that calmness which results from the conscious knowledge that they were not founded in truth, but yet with that anxiety which every man must feel who fears that after the lapse of twenty years, he may not be

enabled to establish that complete and satisfactory defence which he could have made, if, in common fairness and common justice, such accusations had been preferred when the memory of those who heard the debates, and took part in them, was yet recent; when I could have referred to personal friends whether I had used this or that expression; when I could have trusted, not merely to the recollection of friends, but to the honour and generosity of political opponents, for their confirmation of my own impressions as to facts, and the inferences to be drawn from them. Sir, that advantage is denied me; and, debarred of it, I am now to answer these charges. I confine myself to the charges and to the evidence by which they are supported. Nothing else shall I notice. If there be other charges and other evidence, they ought to have been brought forward at the time. It will not be just, on a second occasion, to prefer new charges inculcating my honour, unless the evidence on which those charges rest, be at once brought forward in the fullest manner. If there be other evidence, hitherto withheld, of which I am not cognizant, I shall be prepared to meet it; but I ask this House again, to be generous and just enough to suspend their judgment on any new allegations, and to give me the opportunity of repelling any new evidence, if new evidence is to be adduced.

Sir, I will now proceed to the vindication of myself from the charges which the House has heard; and, whatever may be the difficulties I have to contend against, if I do not succeed in establishing to the conviction of every honourable mind, not biassed, not thwarted by party, that those charges are utterly without foundation, I shall retire from this discussion with deep mortification and poignant disappointment. What, Sir, are those charges, and the evidence which has been brought forward in their support? When the hon. gentleman, the member for Shrewsbury, rose to speak on Monday night, the question at issue was this:—On a preceding night, the noble lord the member for Lynn—a member of parliament in 1826, in 1827, 1828, and 1829, the relative and private secretary of Mr. Canning, and fully cognizant of Mr. Canning's feelings—brought forward, at the late stage of the debate on the Irish bill, and not upon any question affecting the character of Mr. Canning, this charge against me. The noble lord said—"That was the conduct of the right hon. baronet in 1827; but in 1829, the right hon. baronet told the House that he had changed his opinions on that subject (the Catholic question) in 1825, and had communicated that change of opinion to the Earl of Liverpool. That, however, did not prevent the right hon. baronet, in 1827, from getting up in his place, and stating that he had severed himself from Mr. Canning's government, because he could not support a government of which the chief minister was then favourable to the measure, which it appeared afterwards the right hon. baronet had approved of two years before."

Such was the charge of the noble lord the member for Lynn. He asserted that I had declined to act with Mr. Canning as prime minister in 1827, upon the ground that I was adverse to the removal of disabilities from the Roman Catholics; that I objected to hold the office of Secretary of State, Mr. Canning being prime minister. Said the noble lord, "In 1829, in bringing forward the Roman Catholic question, you informed the House that in 1825 your opinions on the Roman Catholic question had changed; you intimated that change of opinion to Lord Liverpool, then at the head of the government, and yet, notwithstanding that admitted change of opinion in 1825, you refused to act with Mr. Canning in 1827." I said at once—not imputing to the noble lord any wilful misstatement—that the charge was altogether unfounded. I never did inform the Earl of Liverpool in 1825, that my opinions on the Catholic question were changed; but this I told Lord Liverpool—that I was Secretary of State for the home department, responsible for the government of Ireland, with the charge of almost every domestic question in the House of Commons; that in 1825, on three great questions vitally concerning Ireland—the removal of Roman Catholic disabilities, the curtailment of the elective franchise, and the payment of the Roman Catholic clergy—I was in a minority; that all my colleagues in the cabinet, having seats in the House of Commons, were opposed to me on these questions; and that in regard to those questions they were acting in concert with my political opponents. I said to Lord Liverpool, in 1825, "This is not seemly; this is not right; I seek to be removed from my position, and no longer to remain responsible for the conduct of affairs in Ireland." And there the matter rested, until the speech of the member for Shrewsbury, on Monday last, implied that my

defence was wholly without foundation, that I was not justified in giving that denial to the noble lord. He insinuated that there was some letter of mine to Lord Liverpool in existence, which proved that I had intimated to Lord Liverpool that there had been not only a wish to relinquish office, but that there was a change of opinion, on my part, on the Roman Catholic question. He cited as a proof of that, an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, in which it was stated, that I had the copy of that letter in my desk. To this I replied, that those who made such an assertion ought to be enabled to prove it; that I challenged the production of any such letter; and I promised that, if the copy of it existed, and was in my possession, it should be produced by me. It is most material, before I proceed, that we should correctly understand what are the charges preferred against me, and on what grounds they are supported. I have no right or wish to plead any statute of limitations. I know that a public man is required to confute charges of this nature, whatever be the lapse of time since the transactions took place. I desire no evasion. I say not now a word about the motives of my accusers. I seek to gain no prepossession in my favour from questioning those motives. I desire to meet the charges themselves; and for that purpose, as a preliminary, distinctly to state the purport and effect of them. They amount, first, to an assertion or insinuation that some letter was written by me to Lord Liverpool, in the year 1825, intimating a change of opinion on the Catholic question; secondly, that whether or no that change of opinion had taken place, or whether or no it had been communicated to Lord Liverpool, still that I had in my place in parliament in 1829 distinctly avowed that there had been this change of opinion. That was the second charge; and it certainly is possible, though it is not easy to divine a reason for it, that, although no change of opinion had taken place, and no communication had been made to Lord Liverpool, I may still have informed the House in 1829, that I had changed my opinion in 1825, and intimated that change to Lord Liverpool. The evidence in support of the charge was this: There was a report in the *Mirror of Parliament* of a speech made by me in 1829, in which it was stated that I had informed Lord Liverpool in 1825 that "the time was come when something respecting the Catholics ought to be done." Now, that is the whole foundation of the charge. These are the expressions upon which the hon. gentleman founds the charge that I had informed Lord Liverpool that a change in my opinion on the Catholic question had taken place. The hon. gentleman proceeded to say—for I wish to state most fully the whole of the evidence against me—whether it be actual or plausible—the hon. gentleman said, "The *Mirror of Parliament* employed an independent class of reporters, men of high eminence, men of peculiar attainments in the art of short-hand writing; the *Mirror of Parliament* was published once in three days, and therefore there was a strong presumption that its reports were accurate; and, if there is any doubt of the fact, there is strong corroboration of the accuracy of the report in the *Mirror of Parliament* to be found in *The Times* newspaper, which contains a report having in it the same words which occur in the *Mirror of Parliament*. Consequently there is a confirmation, from a separate and independent authority, of the correctness of the report of the *Mirror of Parliament*." There was also other evidence corroborative of the accuracy of that report, in the fact that Sir Edward Knatchbull, speaking about a fortnight afterwards, on the 15th of March, 1829, referred to the report in the *Mirror of Parliament*, and assumed the correctness of it. These are, I think, the grounds on which the charges to which I have referred rested. There is also another charge, that I had been guilty of a *suppressio veri*—and that, for unworthy purposes, I had mutilated and garbled the report of the speech which I made in 1829, in bringing forward the Catholic question, omitting the passage inserted in the *Mirror of Parliament*. There may have been other less important charges; but these are the three charges immediately insisted upon. I think I have correctly stated the gravamen of the charges, and the nature of the evidence by which it is sought to sustain them.

Sir, I shall first address myself to this question—did I intimate to Lord Liverpool in the year 1825, or at any other period, that my opinion upon the Catholic question had undergone a change, and that I was prepared to support the removal of Catholic disabilities? First, I will refer to the course which I took in parliament in the year 1825; and I ask whether that course was consistent with such an intimation as that I am asserted to have conveyed to the head of the



government? The House will probably recollect, that Sir F. Burdett brought forward the Catholic question in 1825. He began, as usual, by moving for a committee to consider the Roman Catholic claims. During the progress of that discussion, two other measures were proposed, intended to facilitate the success of the main measure, and called on that account "the wings," the one for a reduction of the number of freeholders in Ireland entitled to vote in counties, the other for granting stipends to the Roman Catholic clergy. It was on the 28th of February, 1825, that Sir F. Burdett brought forward the Catholic question. I took a part in the debate on the motion for the House resolving itself into committee, and I then stated, in concluding my speech—"Without dwelling on the objections as to the time at which this motion was proposed, or its present expediency, he openly announced his objection to its principle. He should, therefore, pursue the course which hitherto he had uniformly persisted in, and give his decided opposition to the measure."

At the conclusion of the debate, Sir F. Burdett said in reply—"He thanked the right hon. gentleman (meaning me) for the candid manner in which he had declared that his objection went to the principle, and not to the details of the question of Catholic emancipation."

There was a considerable majority in favour of the motion so made by Sir F. Burdett: the numbers voting for it, 247; against, 234: the question, therefore, was carried by a majority of 13. The second reading of that bill came on on the 21st of April, 1825, when I find it reported—"Mr. Secretary Peel said, he had heard, and with the most perfect conviction of his sincerity, the avowal of the hon. member for Armagh, that he had changed his opinions upon it. If he (Mr. Peel) had changed his own opinion, he should have been most ready to avow it; but, as he had not changed it, he trusted that his hon. friends would give him the same credit for purity of motive in retaining it, that he gave to the hon. member for Armagh in abandoning it."

The second reading of that bill was carried by 268 to 241—a majority of 27. The third reading came on on the 10th of May, 1825. I again spoke; for, as I complained at the time, the weight of debate fell chiefly on myself and two or three others. I had said on a previous occasion, that I was not prepared to support the total removal of disabilities—that I thought the chief offices in the executive government ought to be reserved to those who dissented from the Roman Catholic religion—that from the legislature Roman Catholics ought to continue excluded—that I retained those opinions, and was not prepared to assent to the admission of Roman Catholics to seats in the legislature, or to the chief offices in the executive government. What I had previously stated was, that—"If the legislature and the chief executive offices of the state were reserved, and all others opened to the Roman Catholics, I did not consider there would be just ground of complaint."

And I said, on the 10th of May 1825—"Believing as I did, that those exceptions and this exclusion ought still to be continued, and the conviction of my mind remaining unaltered by any of the arguments I had heard, I felt it to be my duty to that conviction, and to the Crown, of which I was a minister, to persevere in the course I had adopted."

After such declarations publicly made in parliament, is it probable that I could have gone to the Earl of Liverpool, and informed him that my opinion on the Roman Catholic question had undergone a change, and that I was prepared to acquiesce in the concession of the Roman Catholic claims? It was after the 10th of May—after the third reading of the bill—after I had been in a minority on every division, and also in a minority on the two other bills which were called "the wings" of that measure; it was subsequently to the 10th of May that I intimated to Lord Liverpool that, with these majorities against me, and with a divided cabinet, I had an objection to remain in office; that my position in the government, charged as I was with the administration of executive affairs in Ireland, and defeated on bills vitally concerning Ireland, had become untenable; and I asked to be relieved. It was between the 10th of May and the 20th of May that my communications on that subject with Lord Liverpool took place; that I intimated my desire to be relieved from office; that I subsequently intimated my reluctant consent to retain it. This important fact had occurred in the interval: the Relief Bill had been sent up to the House of Lords: Lord Liverpool had made a more decided speech against the Catholic claims than on

any previous occasion; and the bill had been rejected in the House of Lords, on the 17th of May, by a majority of forty-eight. It thus appears that the majority of the House of Lords were in favour of the views I took on the Catholic question. It was represented to me in the strongest terms that my retirement from office would lead to a dissolution of the government; that Lord Liverpool would retire in the event of my resignation; and consequently that the whole responsibility of breaking up the government would rest with me. At a subsequent period, on the 26th of May, there was a debate on the state of Ireland. Lord Monteagle (then Mr. Spring Rice) brought the question before the House. On that occasion, after my interviews with Lord Liverpool, I took part in the discussion; and this was the language I held on the 26th of May, in reference to a speech made by Mr. Brownlow in the course of the debate:—"His hon. friend now seemed to expect an apology from him for continuing of the same opinion. His hon. friend thought it necessary to call upon him to explain why he too was not converted by the evidence of Dr. Doyle, telling him that the cause was hollow, that the ground was utterly untenable. Now, he admitted that if his hon. friend felt the ground untenable, that was a sufficient reason for his abandoning it. He admired his hon. friend's sincerity; and, if he himself had felt the same motives, he would have followed the example of his hon. friend, and defied all attacks for so doing. But he would beg to be allowed still to occupy ground which he did not feel untenable. He would beg to be allowed, with those who thought with him, to continue of the same mind, seeing that the same light had not broken in upon them which had broken in upon his hon. friend."

Such was the language held by me on the 26th of May, 1825, in the presence of Mr. Canning, who, I firmly believe, was entirely cognizant of what had previously taken place between Lord Liverpool and myself. Is it probable, I again ask, that I should have held that language in the presence of Mr. Canning, and in the face of parliament, if I had told Lord Liverpool that my opinion on the Catholic question was changed? I imposed no restrictions of secrecy as to my communications with Lord Liverpool. Mr. Canning was as much in Lord Liverpool's confidence as I was—probably still more; and I have not a doubt that Mr. Canning was perfectly aware of what had passed, namely, that I had expressed an earnest wish to be relieved from the responsibility of office under the circumstances in which I found myself placed.

In the early part of 1827, before Lord Liverpool's illness, when I had not the slightest anticipation of so early a termination of his public career, the Roman Catholic question again became the subject of discussion; and on the 6th of March, 1827—(it was not till a later period that Lord Liverpool became incapable of transacting public business)—I said—

"He (Sir R. Peel) should still retain his opinions as to what was the system which the country and the legislature ought to enforce. He thought it ought to retain all the existing disabilities, as far as related to admitting Roman Catholics to the legislature and to offices of state.

"If his opinions were unpopular"—(observe, the death of the Duke of York had then taken place)—"he had now the opportunity of showing that he stood by them still, when the influence and authority that might have given them currency were gone, and when it was impossible that he could be suspected of adhering to them with any view to favour or personal aggrandizement."

I most fully expected in 1827 that I should be again in a minority; and, I was prepared to take the same course as in 1825, namely, adhering to my own opinions, immediately to relinquish office. But, to the surprise of all parties, in 1827 there was a majority of four against the Roman Catholic claims. The course I had thus taken in 1827, had not had the slightest reference to the appointment of Mr. Canning as prime minister. On the retirement of Lord Liverpool, when Mr. Canning succeeded to the office of prime minister, I at once intimated to him that I could not retain office in consequence of the diversity which existed in our opinions on the Roman Catholic question.

Such was the public and parliamentary declaration of opinion at that time. It is not of course conclusive evidence as to the purport of the confidential communications that may have taken place with Lord Liverpool. If I could find that I had

intimated an opinion in writing to Lord Liverpool, I should produce the document at once; but I have a firm impression that my communication was a personal one. During the discussions on the third reading of the Roman Catholic bill, I saw Lord Liverpool almost every day, and was not in the habit of making formal written communications to him. My impression, as I stated on Monday night, is, that there was no written communication between us. I have not the slightest doubt that such is the fact; for I find that in 1827, when speaking in parliament on this subject, and when the memory would have a hold of the particular circumstances infinitely more strong than it can be expected to have now, after the lapse of so many years—I find that I stated, not that I had written to Lord Liverpool, but that I had waited upon him:—"After I had been left in minorities on three different questions immediately connected with Ireland—the Catholic question, the elective franchise, and the payment of the Catholic clergy—I waited on my noble friend then at the head of the government. I told him that I anxiously desired to be relieved from my situation. The reply of my noble friend was, that my retirement would determine his own."

And, again, that was what I said in 1827, in the presence of Mr. Canning.

But it may be justly observed, "There may have been no written communication—it may have been verbal—have you the whole correspondence with Lord Liverpool at that time?" I desired the correspondence for seven years under the letter "L" to be brought to London, and, on searching it, I find that my written communications with Lord Liverpool at the period in question were extremely few. This, no doubt, was owing to my habits of constant personal intercourse with Lord Liverpool during the sitting of parliament. There is, however, no letter which has the remotest bearing upon the subject; there is no letter which can throw the slightest light upon it, which I am not ready to produce. Here are letters written to me by Lord Liverpool in 1825; some may think they are material; others may think they are not. I hold in my hands the originals. I have looked into the letters of other years; but I do not find that they have any bearing on the point in question. I do, upon my honour, declare that there is no letter passing between Lord Liverpool and myself upon this matter which I am not most willing to produce. I am willing to communicate the whole *in extenso* to any gentleman who has the least desire to consider their bearing. I have only three letters, written in 1825; and the House will judge, whether from the tenor of these letters, they give the slightest colour to the charge that I had intimated to Lord Liverpool a change of opinion on the Catholic question. In March, 1825, I had been in a minority on the motion of Sir F. Burdett. There were rumours that Lord Liverpool had himself changed his opinions on the Roman Catholic question. It was most material for me to ascertain whether such were the case or not; because if Lord Liverpool's opinions were changed, and I was in a minority in the House of Commons, there were additional reasons for my retirement from office. I received from Lord Liverpool, on the 10th of March, 1825, this letter:—

"(Private.)

"FIFE-HOUSE, March 10, 1825.

"MY DEAR PEEL—I return the report of the Irish Association. I have thought it quite necessary, in consequence of the paragraph in the *Morning Chronicle* of this day, to send an article to the *Courier*, contradicting the reports in circulation respecting any change in my sentiments upon the Roman Catholic question.—Ever sincerely yours,

"LIVERPOOL."

Is it very likely that that letter should have been addressed to me by Lord Liverpool, if I had then intimated to him a change of opinion on my part on the subject of the Catholics? It was subsequent to that communication that I expressed my earnest desire to be relieved from the responsibilities of office. I have been repeatedly charged with avidity and appetite for place. I know not why such an imputation should be thrown out against me. Having acted several years as Irish Secretary, I voluntarily retired from that office in the year 1818. I declined to become a member of the cabinet in 1821; and when I did resume office in 1822 it was with no very gratifying prospects, in consequence of the position in which the government was placed in reference to the Roman Catholic question. On the 17th of March, 1825, the division in the House of Lords took place, and I then intimated my willingness

to remain in office rather than bear the responsibility of breaking up the government. I find the following note from Lord Liverpool, written after the division in the lords:—

“(Private.)”

“FIFE-HOUSE, *May 19, 1825.*”

“MY DEAR PEEL—I have seen Canning, and should be glad if you could call upon me to-night between nine and ten o'clock, for five minutes.—Ever yours;

“LIVERPOOL.”

“Do not trouble yourself to send an answer.”

My impression is, that at that interview I repeated to Lord Liverpool my earnest desire to retire, but that I consented to remain in office. I cannot prove certainly at this distance of time that that interview had reference to the Catholic question: I believe it had. I find a letter which was written to me upon an important subject by Lord Liverpool, bearing date the 15th September. Lord Liverpool was at Walmer Castle at the time, and it was necessary, therefore, that he should communicate with me in writing. He writes:—

“(Most confidential.)”

“WALMER CASTLE, *September 15, 1825.*”

“MY DEAR PEEL—I return in another cover, Goulburn's letters. You may wish to hear from me what I think about dissolution. In the first place, it must be decided one way or the other on the 22nd, the day of our meeting. I have had some correspondence with Canning upon the subject: the inclination of his opinion is to put off the dissolution till next year. I am decidedly for the dissolution now, if the Catholic question is to receive the support of those who are generally friendly to it, in the government, in the next session. But if they are willing that the Catholic and corn questions shall remain in abeyance during the next year, and are prepared, therefore, as to the former, to discourage its being brought on, and, if brought on, to move a previous question or adjournment upon it, in that case I have no desire to press the dissolution during the present autumn. I say to press the dissolution, because I think the reasons for and against it are nearly balanced; and I can readily acquiesce in the decision, whatever it may be. I hear Lord Wellesley is for the dissolution now, and — and the whole — connection, for very opposite reasons, decidedly against it.—Ever sincerely yours,

“LIVERPOOL.”

There are mentioned in this letter two names which, with permission of the House, I omit. They are the names of persons not holding office. This letter was written in the autumn of 1825. Is it possible that this letter could have been written to me if I had previously intimated to Lord Liverpool that I had changed my opinions as to the Catholic claims? It is a communication, “most confidential,” on the probable bearing of a dissolution on the Catholic question; and it is surely in the conviction that my opinion is in concurrence with his own that Lord Liverpool thus confidently writes to me. Those are the three letters which in 1825 I received from Lord Liverpool. They may not be in themselves very important, but they surely are not letters that would have been written by Lord Liverpool to me if I had intimated to him a change in my opinions on the Catholic question. These are the whole of the letters in my possession, which appear to me to have any bearing upon the communication alleged to have taken place with Lord Liverpool. In speaking, in the year 1829, I stated that I held in my hand a document which would prove that my retirement from office would lead to the dissolution of the government. I do not very well recollect what that document was. The object was to prove that my resignation would have led to the resignation of Lord Liverpool. I have the strongest impression that it referred to conversations between me and other members of the cabinet opposed to the Catholic claims, in consequence of an intimation from Lord Liverpool, that he had made up his mind to retire in the event of my resignation. I have searched for the statement, but I have been unable to find it.

I have been hitherto addressing myself to the preliminary question, what was the communication between Lord Liverpool and myself? I now come to the second question, which is a different one. Though I made no such communication as that supposed to Lord Liverpool, did I in 1829 declare that I had made it? The whole foundation for the charge is this—that I said, in 1829, that I had communicated in 1825 to Lord Liverpool my opinion that something as to the Catholics must be done.

I am not going to put any strained interpretation upon those words. I positively deny that I used them. I deny that I stated in 1829 that I had informed Lord Liverpool in 1825 that the time had come when something must be done for the Catholics. This second charge against me is to this effect, that in 1829 I made that statement, and afterwards garbled the speech in which the statement is alleged to have been made. Says the hon. gentleman the member for Shrewsbury—"I am making no charge against the right hon. gentleman; but I say that his is a mutilated, a garbled, or, to use the softer language of this House, a mutilated report."

[An hon. member: Corrected.] Well, "corrected." The variation in the reports as to that expression only shows that too much confidence cannot be placed in them; and yet twenty years after the events have taken place I am to be condemned on account of discrepancies in newspaper reports! But hear my answer to the charge of Monday night. The hon. gentleman began by stating that he adverted to this subject with the deepest pain. He said—"There were two reports, one in *Hazard*, in which members corrected their own speeches, and another in the *Mirror of Parliament*, in which were taken down by the most skilful short-hand writers, most of them men of education and intelligence, reports of every thing that occurred in parliament, which were published every three days."

And the hon. gentleman came down on Monday night. I having no conception whatever of what was about to occur, and, professing that he approached the subject with great pain, stated also that he had been making careful inquiry, and had found that there was an independent body of reporters reporting for the *Mirror of Parliament*, not connected with the public press. The hon. gentleman has a connection with the press, that enables him to speak with some authority on these points. I heard his statement, and it struck me, as it struck others, that evidence of concurrence between two independent and separate authorities was strong, if they had made the same report. The hon. gentleman went on to say—"I have made every inquiry, and I have been informed that the report in the *Mirror of Parliament* was made by Mr. Barrow, one of the most finished short-hand writers, and a man of education and intelligence."

Well, Mr. Barrow is dead, and reference to him is impossible; but I have made inquiry from others, and I give the most peremptory contradiction to the statement that the report in the *Mirror of Parliament* was written by Mr. Barrow. I deny that Mr. Barrow was the reporter at all. Mr. Barrow was the editor of the publication, and was not then, though he might have been a reporter, in the habit of reporting for the *Mirror of Parliament*. The hon. gentleman, for the purpose of adding weight to his charge, having told the House that the report of the *Mirror* was a separate and independent report made by men of high character and attainments, went on to say—"I had the discretion to refer to the report of the speech given in one of the most eminent public papers of the day, and I find, in *The Times* of March 6, 1829, the report is"—so and so.

All this apparent caution invests the hon. gentleman's statement with additional authority; it shows he has not been hasty and indiscreet; that he does not prefer a charge against me on an individual report without having carefully compared and collated it with other reports; and he asks credit for discretion in not making the charge upon a single one. Finding that the report in *The Times* confirms the report in the *Mirror of Parliament*, he concludes that two concurrent reports from two independent authorities render it unnecessary to call for further evidence. Now, I put this question to the hon. gentleman—As you have had the discretion to refer to the report in *The Times*, and have informed the House that it is concurrent with that in the *Mirror of Parliament*, have you had the discretion to examine other reports also? There were other morning papers at that time, for which there were separate and independent reports, and as you took the precaution of referring to one, and, finding an apparent concurrence, have informed the House of that fact, and have concluded that there was no necessity for further evidence; allow me to ask if the same sense of justice has induced you to examine the other reports? Did you look at the reports in the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Herald*, the *Morning Post*, and the *Morning Journal*, a paper which was set up to destroy the hopes of the success of Catholic emancipation? There were four other papers; as you hunted up the report in *The Times*, I ask the question, did you examine the others? If you

did not, how came you to limit your caution and discretion to the production of the only report that seemed to give a confirmation to your charge? If you did examine the others, why did you not in common honesty, admit the discrepancy they exhibit? Why did you not, in justice to me, state that which is the fact, namely, that each report of the four other newspapers, all made by separate and independent reporters, altogether exclude the words on which this imputation is founded? Observe, the words are these—"The time has come when something with respect to the Catholic claims ought to be done," introduced into the passage in which I said I wished to relinquish office. This appears in the *Mirror of Parliament*, and those identical words are in *The Times*, and yet it is stated that these are two independent reports. I will now read the reports of the other papers: this is the report of the *Morning Herald*:—"But, so far as his personal conduct was contrasted with that of 1825, he begged to be allowed to state, that in that year he was a minister of the home department, and, being then in a minority on the Roman Catholic question, he felt that his situation was untenable. He did not at that time seek to be relieved from the duties which had devolved upon him; but he stated to Lord Liverpool his opinion that the time was come when he ought to be relieved from the duties and responsibility of Irish affairs, being, as he then was, in a minority on the question that had the most important relations to them. It was at that time notified to him that his retirement from office would involve that of Lord Liverpool and others, and that a probable consequence of that retirement would be a dissolution of parliament."

See what reports are! The speech reported took four hours in the delivery; I speak it to the honour of the gentlemen who furnish these reports, that I believe they are influenced by an earnest desire to be correct and just to all parties; but how can they avoid mistakes of this kind? Here is a most material one: the report speaks of "a dissolution of parliament," when it is obvious I must have said a dissolution of the government. That is the report of the *Morning Herald*. I will now take that of the *Morning Chronicle*:—"As far, Sir, as my own personal experience goes, allow me to say that in 1825, when I, being the secretary of the home department, was expected to state my opinion on the Catholic question, I felt my situation as a minister, to be one of considerable difficulty, charged as I was with the superintendence of Irish affairs, and yet in a minority in the House of Commons on a question of so much importance as that we are now considering. With this feeling, I sought to be relieved from the duties of a responsible adviser of the Crown. I applied to Lord Liverpool, who was then at the head of her Majesty's government, stated the painful situation in which I found myself, and earnestly pressed to be relieved from it. It was, however, signified to me that my retirement from office would determine the retirement of Lord Liverpool, and that would dissolve the existing government."

Now for the *Morning Post*, which took a part decidedly against me:—"But, as far as he himself was personally concerned, he must state that in the year 1825, when he, as the minister for the home department, found himself in a minority, he felt at least the difficulty of his position, charged as he was with the administration of the affairs of Ireland. He did at that time seek to be relieved from the responsibility of office. He did then state to Lord Liverpool that the time had arrived when he found himself so situated as to require to be relieved from the duties of the station he had filled. He had before had occasion to state that fact, and also to add that Lord Liverpool had said, in reply to his application, that if he (Mr. Peel) retired, the administration must be broken up, for that he (Lord Liverpool) would send in his resignation also. He held in his hand the proof of these facts."

Is not this a marvellous concurrence? But I come now to a still more hostile paper, the *Morning Journal*, established for the express purpose of defeating the measure of 1829; the *Morning Journal* says—"So far as my personal conduct is concerned, I can state that, in 1825, when I was minister for the home department, I was in a minority upon the Catholic question in this House; I felt this at least to be the case, that my situation as minister was untenable. In the office which I held I was charged with the administration of the affairs of Ireland; and, finding myself in a minority on that question, which, in reference to the state of that country, was the most important that could engage my attention, I at that time sought to be relieved from the responsibilities connected with my situation. I at that time told my noble friend

(Lord Liverpool), who was then at the head of the government, that one thing at least must be done, namely, that I should be relieved from the responsibility of office. It was upon that occasion notified to me that my retirement from office would lead to the retirement of my noble friend; that this would break up the whole administration. I should have wished to have been spared the necessity of making any reference to this correspondence. However, I am ready to submit it to the perusal of any person who chooses to inspect it."

Here is an exact concurrence in the purport of the speech in all four papers, and they all omit the passage about the time "having come when something with respect to the Catholic question must be done." The House never heard till I stated it, that though the report in *The Times* did appear to lend a sanction to that in the *Mirror of Parliament*, there were four other papers, with separate and independent reports, all agreeing, with marvellous accuracy, in the general purport of what I said, and all omitting the passage in question. Still when one paper giving an independent report agrees with the report of another paper as to a particular passage of a speech, the absence of that passage in four other reports, however strong a circumstance it may be, does not altogether destroy the effect of such concurrence. There is something remarkable in the concurrence, particularly when Mr. Barrow, this able and intelligent man, an independent reporter for the *Mirror of Parliament*, which had a separate class of reporters, came to the same conclusion as the reporter of *The Times*. But I deny the fact that Mr. Barrow wrote that report; I deny the fact also, that there was a separate class of reporters for the *Mirror of Parliament*. I have inquired into this subject as well as the hon. gentleman; and I state this fact, which I can positively demonstrate, that Mr. Barrow did not report any speech for the *Mirror of Parliament*; and I state also this other fact, that the *Mirror of Parliament* had not a separate class of reporters. I deny altogether the force of the evidence from the supposed accidental concurrence—I state this as the fact, that the reporters of the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Times* were in connection with the *Mirror of Parliament*—that they did not make separate reports—(it would have been absurd if they had done so)—but they met together, compared each other's reports, and sent to the *Mirror of Parliament* that which gave the fullest report of one part of a speech, and that which gave the fullest report of another; and the reports of the *Mirror of Parliament* were concocted from the reports so furnished. That is the information which has reached me, and which I can establish by the most unquestionable evidence. I could prove what I state by taking the report of the *Mirror of Parliament*, and the reports of *The Times*, *Chronicle*, and *Morning Herald*, and showing that the report of my speech inserted in the *Mirror of Parliament* is a mere concoction from the reports of the three newspapers. I can prove that whole pages are taken from one or other of those papers, with scarcely the variation of a word, or only changing the person; altering "he" into "I;" I can prove it by the fact, that trifling errors which by some accident occurred in the report made for *The Times*, by a most able and distinguished reporter (Mr. Tyas), have been copied in the *Mirror of Parliament*. Then, if this be the case, that there were no separate reports for the *Mirror of Parliament*—if they were taken from the other papers—and if in this instance the reference to the "something that ought to be done for the Catholics" was copied from *The Times*, what becomes of the concurrence between them? Does not the argument, founded upon the concurrence of two reports, altogether break down? Well then, as to the charge of garbling my speech. When I knew I had not made use of the words attributed to me, when I saw that the newspapers generally consulted on such matters had excluded them, was I not justified in relying on their concurrence, and in excluding those words also? But the hon. gentleman says he finds this note appended to the speech in *Hansard*, "Inserted with the permission and approbation of Mr. Secretary Peel," and that remark elicited "prolonged cheering;" as if I had sent to *Hansard* a corrected report of the speech with the *suppressio veri*, and begged him to insert it! What is the fact? I should have thought the hon. gentleman would have known it. Mr. Murray, the bookseller, published that speech, and had the copyright of it; the publishers of *Hansard's Debates* applied for my permission to insert that report, and I asked Mr. Murray to grant it; when it was published they inserted a note in order to show that this was not done surreptitiously, but had my

authority and concurrence. I observe, that *The Times* reporter, he who originally made this mistake, and inserted the words, "something ought to be done with the Roman Catholic question," regrets, at the end of the report—though other reporters make no such complaint—that "the right hon. baronet's voice was occasionally so low that he was but indistinctly heard in the gallery;" and, nineteen years after the fact, I am to be called on and condemned upon that report! And on what ground? Because there was a deaf reporter for *The Times*. Every other reporter reported me correctly: *The Times* reporter made a mistake, and *The Times* reporter says I was "indistinctly heard in the gallery."

It was on Monday night last, that, for the first time, I heard of any discrepancies in the reports; and I was denounced as a garbler, and mutilator, and suppressor of the truth, because in correcting my speech I took the authority of four reports against one, the four confirming what was my own impression. I think I have disposed of Mr. Barrow and his independent reports—this man of intelligence and education, who wrote reports which I have demonstrated he did not write. I have not Mr. Barrow to appeal to; but I cannot doubt he would deny the allegation that the *Mirror of Parliament* had a band of reporters separate and distinct from the reporters for the newspapers. I now come to that part of the subject which relates to the speech of my right hon. friend, Sir Edward Knatchbull. As I have said, I was engaged in all the fierce conflicts to which I adverted a little while ago; and I never heard of this charge before. I was not aware that it had been preferred in 1829 by Sir Edward Knatchbull. The fact is, that if I had stated in 1829 that my opinions on the Catholic question had undergone a change in 1825, such a statement would have been utterly at variance not only with the fact, but with the whole tenor of the speech made in 1829. I said in that speech, that I was prepared to take the same course then which I had taken in 1825—namely, resign my office; but with this addition, that I then advised the adjustment of the Catholic question, and that I was prepared in a private capacity to support to the utmost of my power a measure for its adjustment. My speech in proposing the Roman Catholic Relief-bill in 1829, was delivered on the 5th March. On the following day, the 6th of March, I was questioned, not why I had stated that in 1825 my opinions had changed, but the natural question was put to me—if you are prepared to grant Catholic emancipation in 1829, why did you not consent, in 1827, to form part of an administration of which Mr. Canning was to be the head, and which was favourable to concession? That question was put to me on the 6th of March by the Earl of Uxbridge. With respect to the speech of Sir Edward Knatchbull, I know well that my right hon. friend would be incapable of garbling or omitting anything in a speech of his; and I wish hon. members would read that speech. He does there assume that, in the statement made by me on the 5th of March, I had used the words in question; but might not Sir Edward Knatchbull have seen the report of the *Mirror of Parliament*, and drawn his inferences from that report? Here let me ask one other question. As the hon. member for Shrewsbury thought it right to collate the report in the *Mirror of Parliament* with that in *The Times* with regard to my speech, I ask him, did he take the same course with respect to the speech of Sir Edward Knatchbull? The hon. member did not trust to the *Mirror of Parliament* in preferring his accusation against me, but said that he had had the caution to refer to *The Times*, for the purpose of ascertaining whether that newspaper confirmed the report of the *Mirror of Parliament*. Has he taken the same course with respect to the speech of Sir Edward Knatchbull? Has he compared *The Times*' report of Sir Edward Knatchbull's speech with the report in the *Mirror of Parliament*? Here is the report of that speech, which appeared in *The Times* newspaper, and which contains not one single word of the accusation which the *Mirror of Parliament* represents that gentleman to have made against me, namely, that I had admitted that in 1825 I was of opinion that the time had come when concessions should be made to the Catholics. This is the report of Sir E. Knatchbull's speech in *The Times*:—"With reference to the occasion he alluded to, he asked the right hon. gentleman, if the state of Ireland and the country were the reason of his present policy, ought not the measure to have been, in justice to the country, conceded in the time of Mr. Canning? If the same grounds of argument, the same necessity from the state of Ireland existed then as at present, why did not the right hon. gentleman support it when it received the aid and countenance of Mr. Can-



ning? If the right hon. gentleman had not then discovered the necessity of concession, why did he oppose Mr. Canning on other grounds which he has since abandoned? Mr. Canning was the powerful, the consistent, the eloquent advocate of the Catholics; and if the right hon. gentleman, in 1829, saw reason for adopting the line of policy invariably maintained by that distinguished statesman, why did he not as readily see it in 1827, when Mr. Canning was alive?"

The House will not fail to observe, that in the report of *The Times*, there is not one word to favour the supposition that Sir E. Knatchbull charged me with having asserted, in the year 1829, that my opinions with respect to the policy of offering further resistance to the Catholic claims had undergone a change in the year 1825. But, Sir, I have not contented myself with a reference to *The Times* report alone. This accusation is not in the report of the *Morning Herald*, nor in that of the *Morning Journal*. I will take up the *Morning Journal* again. Its version of the speech of Sir E. Knatchbull runs thus:—"I say, then, in reference to that period, that if the policy of conceding the claims of the Catholics was so strong as the right hon. gentleman describes it to be, in common justice to the country, in common justice to himself, that was the moment when he should have conceded them. When Mr. Canning, who was the advocate—the able and the consistent advocate of the Catholic claims, first introduced into parliament a measure for conceding those claims, I did not consider such concession either expedient or necessary. Such was also my impression when they were again brought forward in 1827."

Is it fair to condemn me because there was such a report of the speech of Sir Edward Knatchbull in the *Mirror of Parliament*, of which report I had not the slightest conception; a report which is not confirmed by that of *The Times*, or the *Morning Herald*, or the *Morning Journal*, none of which attribute the expression in question to Sir E. Knatchbull?—is it, I say, just to impute to me that I remained silent under a charge which, so far as my recollection serves me, was never made. I am not prepared to say whether Sir Edward Knatchbull was or was not absent at the time my speech was delivered; but be that as it may, I am certain that he is totally incapable of garbling or mutilating any speech attributed to him.

Now, Sir, I have gone through, one by one, the charges which have been brought against me. I thank the House for the attention with which they have listened to me. I am deeply sensible of the disadvantages under which I have had to labour. Oppressed with public business, I have had to devote two or three days to the collating and contrasting of newspaper reports, of speeches delivered many years since, for the purpose of rebutting charges founded upon such an authority, preferred seventeen years after the transactions in question took place. I trust I may venture to assert I have succeeded in vindicating myself; and yet, considering the difficulty in which I was placed, how possible it is that I might have failed! I might not have been able to have proved my case so completely. But I have had the willing aid of gentlemen connected with the public press—gentlemen beyond my influence, beyond my control. Actuated by no other feelings than those which are suggested by a love of justice, they have generously come forward to supply me with the information necessary for my vindication—the information which enables me to deny that Mr. Barrow reported one line of the speech in 1829—which enables me to deny that the *Mirror of Parliament* had a band of reporters independent of the public press—which enables me to shatter to pieces the hostile conclusions which are founded on the apparent concurrence of the report of *The Times* with that of the *Mirror of Parliament*. I have been enabled to prove that that report is at direct variance with the reports in all the other morning newspapers—to prove that it is not an independent report—that the reason why an equivocal expression appeared in the *Mirror of Parliament* is simply this, that the report of *The Times* was adopted and engrafted into the *Mirror of Parliament*.

The hon. gentleman concluded his speech by a passionate representation of his veneration and affection for the memory of Mr. Canning; and at a fitting time, and in a fitting manner, these are feelings which are to be held in respect. The hon. gentleman described Mr. Canning as an eagle; he spoke of him as the rider of Bucephalus. One would have supposed that he had devoted all the energies of all his intellect to magnify the praises of Mr. Canning, and that he had submitted to some great

personal sacrifice on account of his devotion to Mr. Canning. Why, Sir, if he has those feelings, they are to be held in honour; but if the hon. gentleman is parading these feelings of veneration for the memory of Mr. Canning for the mere purpose of wounding a political opponent, he is desecrating feelings which, when sincere, are entitled to esteem and respect. So far from succeeding in his purpose of inflicting a blow upon me, he is rallying around me public sympathy; and exciting public indignation at the time chosen for this attack, and the motives which led to it. The hon. gentleman frequently and feelingly complains that I won't condescend to bandy personalities with him. I, Sir, defend myself when I think defence is necessary; I defend myself now on account of the plausibility of the charge and concatenation of circumstances brought together as evidence. But when the hon. gentleman is so industrious in his research, as to point out at what house on a certain day I attended a certain dinner, I say at once I will not descend to his details; I know not where the dinner to which he refers, on the 3rd of May, 1827, was given, and I trust the House will pardon me if I do not condescend to inquire. No, Sir, I will not answer that hon. gentleman. I will not inquire whether that hon. gentleman has a right to talk about "an organized hypocrisy," "a pharisaical association." With these charges and these phrases I have no concern. Every man has a right to determine for himself with whom and on what occasions he will descend into the arena of personal contest. I will not retaliate upon the hon. gentleman. I limit myself to the defence of my character when unjustly attacked. If new and unheard-of charges are to be brought against me—if documents of which I have had no notice are to be produced against me after my successful refutation of the argument founded upon those which have been produced, then I put in a preliminary appeal to the justice and to the generosity of this House—I entreat them to bear in mind that I have now no opportunity of replying to new charges. If new charges are to be preferred, I trust either that notice will be given to me of the nature of them, or, if it be not, that the House of Commons will again accede to my appeal, and again suspend their judgment until the time shall come for my defence.

Lord George Bentinck and Mr. Disraeli having replied,—the latter contending that the charges contained in the allegation had not been refuted,—the order of the day for the second reading of the Protection of Life (Ireland) bill was read, and the debate again adjourned. Several more night's having been occupied in the discussion, a division took place and the bill was thrown out, Sir R. Peel and his colleagues being left in a minority of seventy three.

## RESIGNATION OF MINISTERS.

JUNE 29, 1846.

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Mr. Speaker, I feel it to be my duty to avail myself of the earliest opportunity of notifying to this House that in consequence of the position of her Majesty's government, and especially in consequence of the vote to which the House came on the night of Thursday last, refusing to give to her Majesty's servants those powers which they deemed necessary for the repression of outrage and the protection of life in Ireland, they have felt it to be their duty to tender their resignation to a gracious Sovereign. The resolution to tender that resignation was unanimously agreed to by her Majesty's servants, and adopted without hesitation. If I had any complaint to prefer with respect to the course pursued by the House, this is not the occasion on which I would make it. It is impossible not to feel that the occasion of a complete change in the councils of a vast empire, affecting, for weal or for woe, many millions of the Queen's subjects in nearly all parts of the habitable globe, is an important, I might almost say, a solemn occasion. It is not upon such an occasion that one word ought to be uttered by a minister of the Crown, acting in homage to constitutional principles, that can by possibility provoke party controversy. Such controversy would be wholly unsuited to the magnitude of the occasion; and, I must add, that to provoke any such controversy

would be entirely at variance with the personal feelings which influence me in addressing this House. Those feelings would rather prompt me to acknowledge with gratitude the many occasions on which, speaking of the great body of the gentlemen who sit on this side of the House, they have given to my colleagues and myself, at a period antecedent to the present session, their generous and cordial support. They would prompt me also to acknowledge with gratitude the disinterested aid, which we have not unfrequently received from gentlemen opposite, in oblivion of party differences. I trust, therefore, that nothing will escape from me in explaining the course her Majesty's government have thought it their duty to pursue, that can run the risk of provoking the controversy which I deprecate.

Her Majesty, Sir, has been graciously pleased to accept our tender of resignation, and her servants now only hold their offices until their successors shall have been appointed. I said, Sir, that if I had complaints to prefer, this is not the occasion on which I would prefer them. But I have no complaints to make. I did not propose the measures connected with the commercial policy of the empire, which have been so severely contested, without foreseeing the great probability that, whether those measures should succeed or fail, they must cause the dissolution of the government which introduced them. And, therefore, I rather rejoice that her Majesty's ministers have been relieved from all difficulty, by an early and unambiguous decision of the House of Commons; for I do not hesitate to say, that even if that decision had been in our favour on the particular vote, I would not have consented to hold office upon sufferance, or through the mere evasion of parliamentary difficulties. It is not for the public interest that a government should remain in office when it is unable to give practical effect to the measures it believes necessary for the national welfare; and I certainly do not think it probable, in the position in which her Majesty's government were placed by the withdrawal—perhaps the natural withdrawal—of the confidence of many of those who heretofore had given it support, that even if the late vote had been in our favour, ministers would have been able, with credit to themselves, and with advantage to the interests of the country, to conduct the administration of public affairs.

We have advised her Majesty to accept our resignation at once, without adopting that alternative to which we might have resorted, namely, recommending to the Crown the exercise of its prerogative, and the dissolution of the present parliament. I do not hesitate to avow, speaking with a frankness that I trust will offend no one, that if her Majesty's government had failed in carrying, in all their integrity, the main measures of commercial policy which it was my duty to recommend, that there is no exertion that I would not have made—no sacrifice that I would not have incurred—in order to ensure the ultimate success of those measures, or at any rate to give the country an opportunity of pronouncing its opinion on the subject. For such a purpose, I should have felt justified in advising dissolution; because I think the continuance of doubt and uncertainty on such important matters, would have been a greater evil than the resort to a constitutional mode of ascertaining the opinion of the nation. But there has been fortunately no necessity for a dissolution of parliament upon that ground. Those who dissented most strongly from our commercial policy, withdrew all factious and unseemly opposition, and, protesting against our measures, they have finally allowed them to pass. Those measures having thus become the law, I do not feel that we should be justified, for any subordinate considerations, for the mere interests of government or party, in advising the exercise of the prerogative to which I have referred, and the dissolution of parliament. I feel very strongly that no administration is justified in advising the exercise of that prerogative, unless there be a reasonable presumption, a strong moral conviction indeed, that after dissolution they would be enabled to administer the affairs of the country through the support of a party sufficiently powerful to carry their measures. I do not think a dissolution justifiable for the purpose merely of strengthening a party. The power of dissolution is a great instrument in the hands of the Crown; and it would have a tendency to blunt the instrument if it were employed without grave necessity. If the purpose were to enable the country to decide whether ministers had been justified in proposing the measures of commercial policy brought forward at the beginning of the session, those measures having passed into a law, I do not think such a purpose alone would be a sufficient ground for a dissolution. There ought

also to be a strong presumption that, after a new election there would be returned to this House a party with strength sufficient to enable the government, by their support, to carry on that system of public policy of which it approved. I do not mean a support founded upon mere temporary sympathy, or a support founded upon concurrence in one great question of domestic policy, however important. We ought not, in my opinion, to dissolve without a full assurance that we should have the support of a powerful party united with us by accordance in general views and principles of government. In the present state and division of party, and after all that has occurred, I do not entertain a confident hope that a dissolution would give us that support. I think, too, that after the excitement that has taken place—after the stagnation of trade that has necessarily followed our protracted discussions on the Corn-laws and the tariff, it is not an advantageous period for a dissolution, but that the country should be allowed an interval of tranquillity and repose. We have, therefore, on these several grounds, preferred instant resignation to the alternative of dissolution.

The question on which we were defeated, was one connected with Ireland. I should, indeed, deeply lament that defeat, if it could be thought that the measure we proposed for the repression of outrage in Ireland was an indication that her Majesty's servants held any opinion in regard to the policy to be pursued towards that country different from that which I declared towards the close of the last session. To the opinions I then avowed—opinions which had practical effect given to them by the measures we proposed—by such measures, for example, as the charitable bequests acts, and by the vote for the enlarged endowment of the college of Maynooth—I now profess my entire and unqualified adherence. We brought forward the measure against which the House has recently decided, not under the belief that resistance to the contagious spread of crime, and a vigorous repression by law of offences disgracing some parts of the country, were in themselves calculated permanently to improve the social condition of Ireland; but we thought that the restoration and maintenance of order were necessary preliminaries to the success of ulterior legislation for the improvement of the condition of the people. The House, however, has decided otherwise, and I am not about to arraign that decision. I only deprecate the inference that, because we proposed that bill, which some called a measure of coercion, but which we considered a measure necessary for the protection of life, our views in regard to the policy to be pursued towards Ireland have undergone a change. Speaking for myself, I do not hesitate to avow the opinion, that there ought to be established a complete equality of municipal, civil, and political rights, as between Ireland and Great Britain. By complete equality I do not mean—because I know that is impossible—a technical and literal equality in every particular respect. In these matters, as in matters of more sacred import, it may be that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;" and I speak of the spirit and not of the letter in which our legislation, in regard to franchise and privilege, ought to be conducted. My meaning is, that there should be a real and substantial equality of political and civil rights, so that no person, viewing Ireland with an unbiassed eye, and comparing the civil franchises of Ireland with those of England or of Scotland, shall be able to say with truth, that a different rule has been adopted towards Ireland, and that on account of hostility, or suspicion, or distrust, civil freedom is there curtailed and mutilated. That is what I mean by equality in legislating for Ireland in respect to civil franchise and political rights.

With regard to the executive administration in Ireland, I think the favour of the Crown ought to be bestowed, and the confidence of the crown reposed, without reference to religious distinctions. It may appear that we have not practically acted on that principle; but it is not because we repudiate it or deny its justice. When we have taken the opportunity of manifesting confidence in any member of the Roman Catholic body, I cannot say that justice has been done to our motives, nor has the position of the individual accepting a mark of favour from us been such as to encourage other Roman Catholics to receive similar proofs of confidence. Those who succeed us in the government of Ireland may have better means of carrying that principle into execution; and if they act upon it, and bestow the favour and confidence of the Crown without reference to religious differences, they shall hear no complaint from me on that ground.

Then, Sir, with respect to the general spirit in which our legislation for Ireland should be conducted. Adhering to all the opinions which I have heretofore expressed on the greater and more important points of Irish policy, I am at the same time prepared to co-operate with those who feel the present social condition of the people in respect to the tenure of land, and to the relation between landlord and tenant, to be one that deserves our immediate though most cautious consideration. It may be impossible, by legislation, to apply any instant remedy to the state of affairs which unfortunately exists in that country; but, even if the benefit be necessarily remote, that very circumstance ought to operate as an additional stimulus to us to apply our minds without delay to the consideration of a subject of equal difficulty and importance. On all those matters connected with the tenure of land and the relation of landlord and tenant—I would uphold the rights of property. There may be occasionally a seeming temporary advantage in disregarding those rights—but the ultimate and permanent benefit of strictly maintaining them greatly preponderates. The course we have taken during this session of extreme pressure of public business is a sufficient proof that there has been no disinclination on our part to consider the amendment of the law in respect to the tenure and improvement of landed property in Ireland, nor will there be any disinclination to co-operate in our private capacities with those on whom the public trust committed to us is about to be devolved.

Sir, I have reason to believe that the noble lord the member for the city of London, has been commanded by the Queen to repair to her Majesty for the purpose of rendering his assistance in the formation of a government. I presume the general principle upon which the government to be formed by the noble lord will act, so far as its commercial policy is concerned, will be the continued application of those principles which tend to establish a freer intercourse with other countries. If that policy be pursued, as I confidently expect it will, I shall feel it to be my duty to give to the government, in the furtherance of it, my cordial support. If other countries choose to buy in the dearest market, such an option on their part constitutes no reason why we should not be permitted to buy in the cheapest. I trust the government of the noble lord will not resume the policy which they and we have felt most inconvenient, namely, the haggling with foreign countries about reciprocal concessions, instead of taking that independent course which we believe to be conducive to our own interests. Let us trust to the influence of public opinion in other countries—let us trust that our example, with the proof of practical benefit we derive from it, will at no remote period insure the adoption of the principles on which we have acted, rather than defer indefinitely that which *per se* is advantageous to ourselves, in the hope of obtaining by delay equivalent concessions from other countries. Sir, when I express the confident hope that these general principles will influence the commercial policy of the new government, I do not advise that the adoption of them should overrule every moral consideration, or should at once subject every species of production in this country to competition with other nations. I speak generally as to the tendency of our commercial policy. I trust that every step that is taken will be towards the relaxation of restriction upon trade. I, for one, shall not urge upon the government a hasty and precipitate adoption of principles sound in themselves, if through the abrupt and sudden application of them, we incur the risk of a great derangement of the social system. I shall bear in mind that vast experiments have been recently made under the present administration—I shall bear in mind also, that the surplus amount of public revenue is smaller than it ought to be, consistently with the permanent interests of the country. While, therefore, I offer a cordial support in enforcing those general principles of commercial policy which have received the sanction of parliament in the present session, I shall not urge the government to any such simultaneous and precipitate extension of them as may be either injurious to interests entitled from special circumstances to some degree of continued protection, or may incur the risk of deranging the financial system of the country. In delivering these opinions, I am bound to say that I am rather indicating my own intentions and the course I shall individually pursue, than that I have had the opportunity of conferring with others, and am authorized to speak their sentiments. I cannot doubt, however, that those who gave their cordial concurrence to the commercial measures which I have proposed, will be ready to

give their general acquiescence and support to measures of a similar character when proposed by others.

Sir, I do not know that it is necessary that I should make any other declarations as to the future, than those I have already made. I wish to draw no invidious contrast with preceding administrations; I wish to make no allusions in a hostile spirit; but I cannot surrender power without expressing the confident belief that, during the five years for which power has been committed to our hands, neither the interests nor the honour of this country have been compromised. I can say with truth that, during that period, the burden of taxation has been rendered more equal, and that the pressure which was unjust and severe on many classes of her Majesty's subjects has been greatly mitigated. I can say with truth, that many restrictions upon commerce, injuriously affecting the trade of this country, have been removed. Without interfering with legitimate speculation, without paralysing, or at all deranging the credit of the State, stability has been given to the monetary system of this country; and let me here acknowledge with gratitude the cordial support which (without reference to party distinctions) the measures I proposed, with regard to the Bank of England, the joint-stock banks, and the private banks of this country, received in the year 1843. Sir, I trust also that the stability of our Indian empire has not been weakened by the policy we have pursued; and that the glory and honour of the British arms both by sea and land in every part of the world have been maintained, not through our exertions but through the devoted gallantry of the soldiers and sailors of this country. Although there have been considerable reductions in the public burdens, yet I have the satisfaction of stating to the House, that the national defences both by sea and land have been greatly improved, and that the army and navy are in the most efficient state. I trust, likewise, that I may congratulate the House, that, notwithstanding a great diminution of the fiscal burdens of the empire, our finances are in a prosperous and a buoyant state, and that on the 5th July next the return to be laid upon the table will prove there has been an increased consumption of almost every article subject to customs and excise duties, and that general prosperity and the demand which it occasions have supplied the void in our finances that would otherwise have been created. Lastly, I can say with truth, that without any harsh enforcement of the law, without any curtailment of the liberty of the subject, or the freedom of the press, there has been, speaking at least of Great Britain, as much of obedience and submission to the law, as at any period of our history. Nay, I will say more—that in consequence of greater command over the necessities and minor luxuries of life—in consequence, too, of confidence in the just administration of the law, and in the benevolent intentions of parliament, there has been more content, less sedition and public crime, less necessity for the exercise of power for the repression of political disaffection or outrage, than was ever known at any antecedent period. I said “lastly:” but I have reserved one topic, for which I think, without any I unseemly boast, or invidious comparison, I may claim credit for her Majesty's councils—at least for that distinguished man, less conspicuous, perhaps, in debate, than some others, but fully as deserving of public honour and respect—on account of the exertions he has made for the maintenance of peace—I mean my noble friend the secretary of state for foreign affairs. My noble friend has dared to avow that there is a moral obligation upon the Christian minister of a Christian country to exhaust every effort for the maintenance of peace, before incurring the risk, not to say the guilt, of war. But while he has not shrunk from the manly avowal of that opinion, I will in justice to him add this—and it is perfectly consistent with that opinion, as to the moral obligation of maintaining peace while peace can be maintained with honour—that there never was a minister less inclined to sacrifice any essential interest, or to abate anything from the dignity and honour of this country, even for the purpose of securing that inestimable blessing. Sir, I do confidently trust that we leave the foreign relations of this country in a satisfactory state—that, speaking not only of France, but of the other great powers of Europe, there is entire confidence in the honourable intentions of this country, and a real desire on the part of the governments of other powers to co-operate with us in the maintenance of peace. Sir, it is the spirit of mutual confidence on the part of public men, the ministers of great countries, which most

facilitates the maintenance of general peace. Let it be remembered, that we necessarily and frequently come in contact with France in various, and sometimes very distant quarters of the world—that there are on both sides employed in the public service warm partisans, naturally, perhaps justly, jealous of the honour of their respective countries—that grounds of quarrel, small in themselves, inflamed by the spirit of rivalry and keen sense of national honour, might easily be fomented into the causes of war, desolating nations, unless the counsels of the great powers were presided over by ministers of comprehensive views, who, feeling peace to be the true interest of the civilized world, are determined that trifling disputes, and the excited passions of angry partisans, shall not involve their respective countries in the calamities of war.

Sir, if any thing could have induced me to regret that decision on the part of the House, which terminates the existence of the government, it would have been the wish that we should survive the day when intelligence might be received from the United States as to the result of our last attempt to adjust the differences with that country—differences which, unless speedily terminated, must probably involve both countries in the necessity of an appeal to arms. The House will probably recollect that, after we had offered to leave the dispute respecting the territory of the Oregon to arbitration, and that offer had been rejected, the President of the United States sent a message to the Congress, which led to discussions with regard to the termination of the convention entered into several years since, which provided for a temporary adjustment of our differences—at least, for a temporary avoidance of quarrel—and enabled the two countries jointly to occupy the territory of the Oregon. The two Houses of the American Congress, advised the President of the United States to exercise his unquestionable power, and to signify to this country the desire of the United States to terminate after the lapse of a year the existing convention. They, however, added to that advice, which might, perhaps, otherwise have been considered of an unsatisfactory or hostile character, the declaration that they desired the notice for the termination of the convention to be given, in order that an amicable adjustment of the dispute between the two countries might thereby be facilitated. It appeared to us, that the addition of that conciliatory declaration—the expression of a hope that the termination of the convention might the more strongly impress upon the two countries the necessity of amicable adjustment—removed any barrier which diplomatic punctilios might have raised to a renewal by this country of the attempt to settle our differences with the United States. We did not hesitate, therefore, within two days after the receipt of that intelligence—we did not hesitate, although the offer of arbitration made by us had been rejected, to do that which, in the present state of the protracted dispute, it became essential to do—namely, not to propose renewed and lengthened negotiations, but to specify frankly and without reserve, what were the terms on which we could consent to a partition of the country of the Oregon. Sir, the President of the United States met us in a corresponding spirit. Whatever might have been the expressions heretofore used by him, however strongly he might have been personally committed to the adoption of a different course, he most wisely and patriotically determined at once to refer our proposals to the senate—that authority of the United States, whose consent is requisite for the conclusion of any negotiation of this kind; and the senate, acting also in the same pacific spirit, has, I have the heartfelt satisfaction to state, at once advised acquiescence in the terms we offered. From the importance of the subject, and considering that this is the last day I shall have to address the House as a minister of the Crown, I may, perhaps, be allowed to state what are the proposals we made to the United States for the final settlement of the Oregon question. In order to prevent the necessity for renewed diplomatic negotiations, we prepared and sent out the form of a convention, which we trusted the United States would accept. The first article of that convention was to this effect, that—“From the point on the 49th parallel of north latitude, where the boundary laid down in existing treaties and conventions between Great Britain and the United States terminates, the line of boundary between the territories of her Britannic Majesty and those of the United States shall be continued westward along the said 49th parallel of north latitude, to the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island, and thence southerly through the middle of the said channel, and of Fucus's Straits to the Pacific Ocean; provided,

however, that the navigation of the said channel and straits, south of the 49th parallel of north latitude, remain free and open to both parties."

Those who remember the local conformation of that country will understand that that which we proposed is the continuation of the 49th parallel of latitude, till it strikes the Straits of Fuca; that that parallel should not be continued as a boundary across Vancouver's Island, thus depriving us of a part of Vancouver's Island, but that the middle of the channel shall be the future boundary, thus leaving us in possession of the whole of Vancouver's Island, with equal right to the navigation of the Straits. Sir, the second article of the convention we sent for the acceptance of the United States was to this effect, that—"From the point at which the 49th parallel of north latitude shall be found to intersect the great northern branch of the Columbia river, the navigation of the said branch shall be free and open to the Hudson's Bay Company, and to all British subjects trading with the same, to the point where the said branch meets the main stream of the Columbia, and thence down the said main stream to the ocean, with free access into and through the said river or rivers, it being understood that all the usual portages along the line thus described, shall in like manner be free and open. In navigating the said river or rivers, British subjects, with their goods and produce, shall be treated on the same footing as citizens of the United States; it being, however, always understood, that nothing in this article shall be construed as preventing, or intended to prevent, the government of the United States from making any regulations respecting the navigation of the said river, or rivers, not inconsistent with the present treaty."

Sir, I will not occupy the attention of the House with the mere details of this convention. I have read the important articles. On this very day, on my return from my mission to her Majesty, to offer the resignation of her Majesty's servants, I had the satisfaction of finding an official letter from Mr. Pakenham, intimating in the following terms the acceptance of our proposals, and giving an assurance of the immediate termination of our differences with the United States:—

"WASHINGTON, June 13, 1846."

"MR LORD—In conformity with what I had the honour to state in my despatch, No. 68, of the 7th instant, the President sent a message on Wednesday last to the senate, submitting for the opinion of that body the draught of a convention for the settlement of the Oregon question, which I was instructed by your lordship's despatch, No. 19, of the 18th of May, to propose for the acceptance of the United States.

"After a few hours deliberation on each of the three days, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, the senate, by a majority of 38 votes to 12, adopted yesterday evening a resolution advising the President to accept the terms proposed by her Majesty's government. The President did not hesitate to act on this advice, and Mr. Buchanan accordingly sent for me this morning, and informed me that the conditions offered by her Majesty's government were accepted by the government of the United States, without the addition or alteration of a single word.—I have the honour to be, &c.

"R. PAKENHAM.

"The Right Hon. the Earl of Aberdeen, K. T., &c."

Thus, Sir, the governments of two great nations, impelled, I believe, by the public opinion of each country in favour of peace—by that opinion which ought to guide and influence statesmen—have, by moderation, by mutual compromise, averted the dreadful calamity of a war between two nations of kindred origin and common language, the breaking out of which might have involved the civilized world in general conflict. A single year, perhaps a single month of such a war, would have been more costly than the value of the whole territory that was the object of dispute. But this evil has been averted consistently with perfect honour on the part of the American government, and on the part of those who have at length closed, I trust, every cause of dissension between the two countries. Sir, I may add, to the credit of the government of this country, that, so far from being influenced in our views in regard to the policy of terminating these disputes about the Oregon by the breaking out of the war between the United States and with Mexico, we distinctly intimated to Mr. Pakenham, that although that event had occurred, it did not affect, in the slightest degree, our desire for peace. Mr. Pakenham, knowing the real wishes



and views of his government, having a discretionary power in certain cases to withhold the proposals we had instructed him to make, wisely thought the occurrence of Mexican hostilities with the United States, was not one of the cases which would justify the exercise of that discretionary power, and therefore most wisely did he tender this offer of peace to the United States on the impulse of his own conviction, and in full confidence in the pacific policy of his own government. Let me add, also, and I am sure this House will think it to the credit of my noble friend, that on the occurrence of these hostilities between Mexico and the United States, before we were aware of the reception which the offer on our part in respect to the Oregon would meet with, the first packet that sailed tendered to the United States the offer of our good offices, for the purpose of mediation between them and the Mexican government. Sir, I do cordially rejoice, that, in surrendering power at the feet of a majority of this House. I have the opportunity of giving them the official assurance that every cause of quarrel with that great country on the other side of the Atlantic is amicably terminated.

Sir, I have now executed the task which my public duty imposed upon me. I trust I have said nothing which can lead to the revival on the present occasion of those controversies which I have deprecated. Whatever opinions may be held with regard to the extent of the danger with which we were threatened from the failure in one great article of subsistence, I can say with truth that her Majesty's government, in proposing those measures of commercial policy which have disintitiled them to the confidence of many who heretofore gave them their support, were influenced by no other motive than the desire to consult the interests of this country. Our object was to avert dangers which we thought were imminent, and to terminate a conflict which, according to our belief, would soon place in hostile collision great and powerful classes in this country. The maintenance of power was not a motive for the proposal of these measures; for, as I said before, I had not a doubt, that whether these measures were accompanied by failure or success, the certain issue must be the termination of the existence of this government. It is, perhaps, advantageous for the public interests that such should be the issue. I admit that the withdrawal of confidence from us by many of our friends was a natural result. When proposals are made, apparently at variance with the course which ministers heretofore pursued, and subjecting them to the charge of inconsistency—it is perhaps advantageous for this country, and for the general character of public men, that the proposal of measures of that kind, under such circumstances, should entail that which is supposed to be the fitting punishment, namely, expulsion from office. I, therefore, do not complain of that expulsion. I am sure it is far preferable to the continuance in office without a full assurance of the confidence of this House. I said before, and I said truly, that in proposing our measures of commercial policy, I had no wish to rob others of the credit justly due to them. I must say, with reference to hon. gentlemen opposite, as I say with reference to ourselves, that neither of us is the party which is justly entitled to the credit of them. There has been a combination of parties, generally opposed to each other, and that combination, and the influence of government, have led to their ultimate success; but the name which ought to be associated with the success of those measures is not the name of the noble lord, the organ of the party of which he is the leader, nor is it mine. The name which ought to be, and will be, associated with the success of those measures, is the name of one who, acting, I believe, from pure and disinterested motives, has, with untiring energy, made appeals to our reason, and has enforced those appeals with an eloquence the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned: the name which ought to be chiefly associated with the success of those measures, is the name of RICHARD CORDEN.

Sir, I now close the observations which it has been my duty to address to the House, thanking them sincerely for the favour with which they have listened to me in performing this last act of my official career. Within a few hours, probably, that power which I have held for a period of five years will be surrendered into the hands of another—without repining—without complaint on my part—with a more lively recollection of the support and confidence I have received during several years, than of the opposition which during a recent period I have encountered. In relinquishing power, I shall leave a name, severely censured I fear by many who, on public

grounds, deeply regret the severance of party ties—deeply regret that severance, not from interested or personal motives, but from the firm conviction that fidelity to party engagements—the existence and maintenance of a great party—constitutes a powerful instrument of government: I shall surrender power severely censured also, by others who, from no interested motive, adhere to the principle of protection, considering the maintenance of it to be essential to the welfare and interests of the country: I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist who, from less honourable motives, clamours for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit; but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened by a sense of injustice.

When the cheering which followed the close of this speech had subsided,

Sir R. Peel said: I have received a communication from the noble lord whose services have been required by her Majesty; and I trust, in conformity with his wish, the House will unanimously support the motion I shall now make, namely, that the House at its rising do adjourn till Friday next.

House adjourned till Friday.

## FACTORIES BILL.

MARCH 3, 1847.

Mr. Fielden moved the Order of the Day for going into committee on this bill.

On the motion that the Speaker leave the chair,—Mr. B. Escott moved as an amendment "That the House resolve itself into committee on this bill, that day six months."

SIR ROBERT PEEL: I thought it probable that some gentleman, being a decided advocate of the bill, would reply to the speech of the vice-president of the board of trade; and I therefore did not rise sooner, being desirous to afford to any hon. gentleman who might so wish to address the House, a full opportunity of expressing his views. As time is now pressing, [it was nearly a quarter past five,] I will not occupy more than my fair share of that time, but will give to any advocate of the bill who may desire to speak, the means of doing so. But, Sir, as I have been supported by a majority, when on former occasions I have given my opinion against further interference with the hours of labour, I feel it incumbent on me, now that I expect to be in a small minority, and am opposed to the opinion of the noble lord at the head of the government, not to shrink from expressing, under these altered circumstances, my continued adherence to my former views and opinions. Sir, I have more than once excited a smile when, as first minister of the Crown, I have said that there were three courses which it was open to me to adopt. The noble lord who now occupies the office I held, has also succeeded to my position in that respect. Not only are there three courses, one or other of which it is open to the noble lord to pursue, but he may also adduce in favour of each of those courses, the authority of a colleague and a cabinet minister. On his left sits his right hon. friend the secretary for Ireland—practically conversant with the commercial affairs and interests of this country, in the office which he filled for many years with great ability—who declares emphatically against further interference with the hours of labour. On his right is the secretary of state for the home department, who is in favour of going into committee, and who states further, that if in committee the advocates of the period of ten hours should succeed in inserting the word "ten" instead of "eleven," though he prefers eleven hours to ten, still he is determined to consent to the third reading of the bill. Now, it is sometimes painful enough to be compelled to come to a decision between two opposite authorities; but the noble lord is in a still worse position—he is in the unfortunate dilemma of having three high authorities around him, each setting him a different example; for beside his two other colleagues, sits the noble lord, the first commissioner of the woods and forests, who says that if in committee ten hours should be substituted for eleven, he in that case must vote altogether against the bill. Now, Sir, there was a famous mathematical problem

which was regarded as being very difficult of solution. It was this—to determine the point at which a body exposed to the attraction of three other bodies will remain at rest. I hope the noble lord will give us the advantage of hearing that problem solved politically, which it is so difficult to solve mathematically; and will determine, as he is exposed to the attraction of three ministerial bodies revolving in his immediate neighbourhood, whether he will remain, at rest (which would be denoted by not voting at all), or whether he will yield to the superior attraction of some one or other of his three discordant colleagues.

I must touch on a subject not immediately before the House, but on which, I trust, I may be allowed to say a few words. The noble lord, the member for Lynn, has assumed that the result of our experience with reference to the relaxation of restrictions on commerce, and the reduction of duties on articles of consumption of the first necessity, has disappointed the expectations formed as to the consequences of that policy. And the noble lord has referred to the diminished exports of this year, as compared with those of last year, for the purpose of proving the correctness of his assumption. Sir, my firm conviction is, that the result of all intervening experience has tended to demonstrate the truth of the principles on which we have acted. It may be true, that in this year, as compared with the last, there have been diminished exports; but if increasing exports are to be taken as a test of the policy pursued, let us review not the exports of a single year, but the exports of the several years that have elapsed since you commenced the relaxation of protective duties, and compare them with the exports of some antecedent period. In 1842 you altered the Corn-laws. You removed the prohibitions which had previously existed on the importation of many articles of foreign produce, and you reduced the duties on all the chief elements of manufactures. You then commenced that system which was acted on from time to time up to the end of last session. Now, what was the result? In 1842, the declared value of our exports was £47,331,000. In 1843, during the operation of this system of relaxation, of removal of prohibitory duties, and the more free admittance of the raw material, the declared value of our exports was £52,279,000. In 1844, it was £58,584,000. In 1845, £60,100,000. It is true that in the year 1846, the exports were less than they had been in 1845; but, at all periods of our history, and especially when protection was at its highest, a great excitement in commerce has always been followed by a corresponding depression. Let us examine our exports at a period anterior to the adoption of a liberal commercial policy. In 1836, our exports were £53,000,000; in 1837, they fell to £42,000,000; in 1839, they were £53,000,000; in 1840, they were £51,000,000; in 1841, they were £51,000,000 (protection then being in the ascendant); and in 1842, they were, notwithstanding, so low as £47,000,000. So that, while the protective system was in full force, vicissitudes in commerce continually occurred, and depression followed excitement as a natural consequence. So also, in 1846, if there has been a reduction in our chief articles of export to the extent of nearly £2,000,000, as compared to the greatly increased exports of 1845, it is no very peculiar or novel circumstance. But are there no concomitant circumstances worthy of remark? Is there nothing to compensate and console us for the admitted fact of diminished exports? Nothing that may in some measure account for that fact? Have you not had, during the greater part of last year, a very high price of provisions in this country? Has not that high price of provisions prevailed also in other parts of Europe? Has not that high price of food tended to cripple the means of expending income on superfluities, on all articles less necessary than those required for subsistence? Do not you see in that fact, coupled with the high price of the raw material of one of your chief manufactures, quite enough, independent of the natural vicissitudes of trade and commerce, to account for the diminution of exports in 1846, as compared with 1845? But can you show me at any former period of similar depression a buoyant revenue? Can you show me in former cases of commercial adversity, such a feeling of contentment—of patient submission to privation and suffering—pervading all classes of the country as has pervaded those classes in the last year? And what was it that determined them thus loyally and patiently to bear up against misfortune? The conviction that legislative restrictions were not the cause of the high price of provisions. What inference can the noble lord the member for Lynn draw from the decrease of exports in 1846, adverse to our recent commercial policy? Would the

noble lord now desire that the Corn-law which existed before 1842, should have been scrupulously maintained? During the last year you have found it necessary to import not less than 5,000,000 quarters of corn, the produce of other countries. So little have you relied on your independence of foreign supplies, that during the last year, for the maintenance of the people of Ireland, as well as for the people of this part of the empire, you have imported not less than 5,000,000 quarters of corn. Notwithstanding this enormous import, the average price of wheat is at this moment not less than 71s. a quarter. And now, under so special and extraordinary a misfortune as the failure of that root on which 4,000,000 of the people of Ireland depended for food—how could Ireland have found subsistence, if we had still excluded Indian corn, or had levied high duties on that and other kinds of food? So different, indeed, are the conclusions to be drawn with regard to Ireland from the premises on which the noble lord relies, that I would cite the single case of Ireland as a sufficient justification for the remission of duties on the import of food.

Sir, I will now address myself to the question actually before the House. I admit that it would be taking a narrow view, to argue it on what are generally understood to be the rigid principles of political economy. The Italian writers on political economy—and they are among the most distinguished writers on that science—charge the English economists with taking too restricted a view of the objects which it should embrace. They say that the English writers discuss only the means of acquiring and distributing wealth; whereas they regard political economy as a complex and comprehensive science which concerns, not only the wealth, but the morality and social welfare of the people. I will not say whether this charge of the Italian writers is well-founded or not. I believe our political economists purposely and avowedly confine themselves to a single branch of a most extensive and diversified system of social policy, not claiming for that single branch exclusive or pre-emptive consideration. I am quite ready, however, to discuss this question on the extended ground assumed by the Italian writers. I will not confine my attention to the mere amount of material advantage to be derived from increased labour, or the mere pecuniary gain resulting from unfettered manufactures and extended commerce. I will take a far wider ground, and will give my vote against this bill, from the sincere conviction that it is not for the benefit of the working classes—that it would not tend to the advancement of their intellectual culture, or of their social improvement, to impose a new restriction on the hours of labour.

In the first place, let me consider this restriction as it affects the general interests of the country. There cannot be a doubt, that up to the present time, the prosperity of the great branches of manufactures has been maintained. But, notwithstanding this prosperity, you are levying £6,000,000 of money annually, under the name of poor rates, which sum is applied to the maintenance of the poor. I am not speaking of the extraordinary demand made upon you under extraordinary circumstances—I am not referring to the £8,000,000 you are about to expend in the present year for the relief of Ireland. I speak of the ordinary levy of £6,000,000 annually for the maintenance of those who cannot maintain themselves by labour. That is a most important consideration in determining the policy of further restrictions on the hours of labour. But what are your securities for the maintenance of manufacturing prosperity? There are three securities. You have capital, machinery, labour. I do not know why we should presume that we possess greater intellectual powers, or greater capacity for exertion than any other nation. Peace and the love of gain will sharpen their intellect and encourage their industry as well as ours. Look at the Germans who settle amongst us and carry on extensive trade—are they an inferior race? Will not the French also and the Italians be found to vie with us in all respects? Will not they be as desirous as we are to improve their skill, and to advance their interests? I wish not to detract from our native vigour of character, when I say that I think we are apt to rely too much upon our superiority. The three main securities for the maintenance of our manufacturing prosperity are, I repeat, capital, machinery, and labour. We may, I trust, safely calculate on the continuance of peace. But, peace continuing, what dependence can there be that the employment of English capital in foreign countries may not increase—that foreign countries may not see the policy of giving encouragement to such employment of it? Then, with regard to machinery, look at the increase of the quantity

exported last year: there, at least, there was no decrease in our exports. [Lord G. Bentinck: You permitted the export of machinery.] We did: and do you suppose that we authorized the exportation of machinery without some sufficient motive? There was no alternative left. There are some cases which laws cannot reach—some things which laws cannot prevent. You had a committee on the export of machinery; they examined those who were best acquainted with the subject. And what was the result? Why, that your prohibition amounted only to this—that it caused the loss of a trade which you otherwise might have. Officers of the customs showed you that you could not prohibit the exportation of separate parts of machinery, or of the designs for it made by the most eminent of our engineers; that you could not prevent the expatriation of our artisans; and the conclusion to which the committee came was, that the prohibition must be repealed, not for the benefit of other countries, but because it would enable us to retain at home the manufacture of the machinery to be exported. The question was, not whether foreign countries should or should not have access to improved machinery; but whether Sheffield, and Birmingham, and other great towns, should retain the manufacture, or whether British skill and British labour should be transferred to other countries, and there employed in the manufacture of machinery for foreign use. I am sure the right hon. gentleman will remember the painful position in which the privy council were constantly placed, in having to determine whether they ought to grant or withhold permission to export machinery. [“Hear!”] Capital and machinery then were free as the winds. There remains labour; and I advise you to direct your serious consideration to this point before you restrict it. I appeal to the noble lord the member for Lynn, who expected so much from the establishment of railways in Ireland—I appeal to him whether the more you extend the railway system, you do not lessen the impediments to locomotion, and increase the facilities, in time of peace, for skilled labourers to remove abroad, and there get higher wages for their labour? And observe, that not only are the physical impediments to travelling removed, but those prejudices against it which exist to a great extent in the English character. Working men read the accounts of the wages given in foreign countries; they learn also that they will be well received and heartily welcomed; they find that they can reach Rouen and other manufacturing towns in France or Belgium, in fourteen or fifteen hours; partly from curiosity, partly from the hope of gain, assured that they will be well treated, they are influenced by new motives, which did not operate when travelling was expensive, and when an impression prevailed that English workmen would be ill-paid, and insulted, and treated as alien enemies in a foreign land. If this account be correct, look at our present position. You have no exclusive command over your own capital, over your own machinery, or over your own labour: in this state of things, you propose to place new legislative restrictions nominally upon the labour of women and children, but practically upon the labour of adult males. You say to the man, who, being in the possession of health, desires to labour—who, foreseeing the day when he will be incapacitated from labour by age or infirmity, wishes to provide some resource for the future—you say to this man, “You shan’t work more than five days a week.” You cut off, by law, two hours from that which constitutes his present working day. With the tendency there is, and must be, to equalise throughout Europe the advantages of capital, machinery, and labour, you inform the adult male operative, “It is not for your good that you should labour more than five days a week in your native country.” Sir, I fear the consequences of such legislation. It may be said, that these are but prospective dangers, and that your linen, your silk, and your woollen manufactures have taken such root in the soil, that you cannot be dispossessed of your superiority. But other countries, in other times, have had the same superiority, have felt the same confidence in its continuance, and have had a bitter reverse of fortune, which may not, I hope, be in reserve for you.

But still there are higher considerations than those of wealth and commerce; and if you could convince me that the present measure would tend to the moral and intellectual improvement, to the general, the social welfare, of the labouring classes, I should be tempted to make the experiment; for I feel, that in improving the condition and elevating the character of those classes, we are advancing the first and highest interests. I feel that society is not safe unless we can do that. We are

giving those classes intellectual improvement; but unless the general character of our legislation is to increase their comfort and improve their moral habits, their mere intellectual improvement will become a source of danger and not of strength. By every means, then—by the improvement of the sanitary condition of our towns—by substituting innocent recreation for vicious and sensual indulgence—we should do all in our power to increase the enjoyments and improve the character of the working classes. I firmly believe that the hopes of the future peace, happiness, and prosperity of this country, are closely interwoven with the improvement, religious as well as moral, of those classes. But, consistently with this persuasion, I oppose these restrictions on labour. Sir, the hon. member for Salford (Mr. Brotherton), in a speech which did him much honour, was influenced by feelings in which I personally ought to, and do, participate. He says, the only question is, whether it is fit that women and children should work twelve hours a day. But is that the only question? If it be, then I am of opinion with him, that ten hours a day is enough for women and children to labour. Nay, I go farther than the hon. member. If I am asked, whether I do not think eight hours a day sufficient labour for a girl of fourteen years of age, or for a mother with three or four children to attend to—if that is the question upon which the debate turns—then I am for eight hours, and not ten. But why do you hesitate about an eight hours bill? Is it not because you strike a balance between the admitted advantages of additional leisure, and the evil that would arise from a reduction of wages? On what principle, except upon the principle to which I refer, do you give the preference to ten hours of labour over eight for a child or a mother? Sir, I do not deny the advantage of leisure; but I greatly doubt whether there be any better means of improving the condition of the labourer, and of elevating the character of the working classes, than to give them an increased command over the necessities of life. You say that by this bill you will not diminish wages. But will it not be a most marvellous event in legislation, if you provide by law that five days in the week shall be the maximum of labour in this country, and yet can induce the master to pay the same amount of wages? Notwithstanding the active competition of manufactures in America, France, Italy, and Germany, you expect that the masters in this country are to go on paying five days' work with six days' pay. But we are told that the mode of doing this will be by working the machinery so as to get twelve hours' work done in ten hours. I doubt whether you can do that; and I doubt, also, whether, if you can, you will thereby confer any advantage upon the workpeople. I doubt whether it is not for the advantage of adult women and children, that they should continue working for twelve hours, rather than finish the same quantity of work in ten hours, by a greater strain upon their bodily and mental faculties. The hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Beckett), a friend of the bill, is forced to admit, that if we go the length of a ten hours bill, we may run the risk of depriving the working classes of the liberal assistance now given by some of the masters in providing schoolmasters and medical assistance for their workpeople.

I come now to the question of wages. How easy it is to speak of a reduction in wages! I wish we would call it income. Let us call the wages of the working man his income; and let us call a reduction of wages an income tax. You are about to impose an income tax upon the operatives, and not upon those only who are employed in factories. A manufacturer told me he employed 1,500 adults in labour connected with his manufactory, but not performed within its walls. This gentleman also declared that he should be compelled to call his workmen together when this bill came into operation, and tell them, "I am forced by law to decrease your hours of labour one-sixth, and I must in my own defence curtail your wages one-sixth." The wages—the annual income of these operatives—amount probably to £50 or £60 each on the average. The income will be reduced one-sixth—that is to say, the operatives will be subject to an Income-tax, not such as we pay of 3 per cent., but of 16 per cent. It has been said by a high authority—and the remark is pregnant with truth—that in prosperous times the workman shares with his employer in the general prosperity, but that he does not benefit half so much by prosperity as he suffers from adversity. The owner of capital can bear up against temporary depression; for he can draw upon the gains accumulated in the time of prosperity. It is not so with him whose whole capital is labour. And it is to him, already labouring under dis-

advantage in this respect, that you are about to say, "You shall not lay by a surplus from your wages, in the vigour of life and while in the enjoyment of health, to meet the evil day by which you may before long be overtaken." You cannot over-estimate the importance to these men of a small saving—of the possession of some such sum as ten or twelve pounds. It may be to them the foundation of future independence. It may enable the father of a family—imitating the honourable example of the member for Salford (Mr. Brotherton)—to gather that family around him and say, "From these small gains I will lay the foundation of a fortune, such as hundreds in Lancashire have acquired by their own industry and integrity." Why, I myself, could name at least ten individuals in Lancashire who, when I was a boy, were earning only 25s. or 80s. a week, and each of whom is now worth, it may be, from £50,000 to £100,000. But who is to answer for the result, if you paralyse the efforts of such men by your legislation—if you fetter their industry, and restrict their hours of labour, and by preventing them from profiting by the time of prosperity, drive them, when the hour of adversity shall come, to the poor law for a maintenance? Will not the labouring man go to a country in which no such restrictions do prevail? Will he not soon ask the price of a third-class fare to Dover, and transfer his skill and the vigour of his English character to some place where he could use them without restraint? The amount of weekly earnings is the great point on which the happiness and independence of a working man's family turns. I have here a book containing statements which have struck me forcibly, and which give an account of the appropriation of the wages of two families. In the first family the number of persons is nine, and the wages are 18s.; in the second the number is seven, and the wages are 9s. This is the way in which the weekly income is appropriated: In the first family the income of 18s. per week is laid out as follows:—Bread, 10s. 6d.; house-rent, 1s.; washing, 1s.; and fire, 1s.; making 13s. 6d.; this leaves for clothing, tea, sugar, and meat, 4s. 6d. extra. In the family of seven persons, having 9s. per week, the payments are, for bread, 5s. 6d.; rent, 1s.; fire, 1s.; washing, 9d.; making 8s. 3d.; there is left for clothing, for tea, sugar, and meat, not 4s. 6d., but 9d. only! Thus every shilling cut off from the income of such a family is attended with great diminution in their comforts. Intelligent men are asked in the volume before me how it is possible for a labouring man to maintain a family of four or five children upon 10s. a week? The question is put to clergymen and to persons engaged in agriculture, and here are the answers—Mr. Huxtable, a great agriculturist, being asked how a labouring man maintains a wife and four or five children upon 10s. a week, says that is a problem he cannot solve by any calculation, and that all attempts to solve it, so far as he has seen, are entire failures. The next person who is asked, says he cannot answer the question; that he was altogether at a loss to conceive how it was done, and that he was never satisfied with the explanation he received from labourers' wives upon this point. Let us reflect, then, what may be the consequence of reducing still further the wages of labour. [Interruption.] I beg pardon of the House for not having fulfilled my promise; but I have been led on far beyond my intentions by the importance of the subject. Sir, I will now conclude by repeating, that if I oppose this bill, it is not because I do not sympathize with the attempt to improve and to elevate the working classes in the scale of society, but because I believe that an unwise interference with labour will undermine the great sources of our national wealth, and will also restrict and fetter the comfort and enjoyment and independence of the working classes. It is on these grounds that, acknowledging, as I fully do, the special claims which those classes have upon my sympathy and support, I must give a vote in opposition to their wishes, but in favour of their real and permanent welfare.

Amendment negatived, and the House adjourned.

#### RAILWAYS, &c., (IRELAND)—MONETARY CRISIS.

APRIL 30, 1847.

The House in committee on the Public Works (Ireland).

At the conclusion of an explanatory speech by the chancellor of the exchequer

the following motion was put :—" That the commissioners of her Majesty's treasury be authorized to direct advances to be made out of the consolidated fund of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland to the commissioners for the issue of loans for public works and fisheries, &c., to an amount not exceeding £620,000 in the whole, to be by them advanced towards defraying the expense of making the following railways in Ireland, viz. :—The Great Southern and Western Railway; the Waterford and Kilkenny Railway; and the Dublin and Drogheda Railway."

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, in the whole course of the discussions that have taken place upon measures intended for the relief of the people of Ireland, the last wish I have had was to throw any difficulty in the way of her Majesty's ministers. I have been fully sensible of the magnitude of the danger they have had to encounter. I am fully conscious of the extreme difficulty there is in forming any sound judgment as to the measures that are best adapted to meet the present crisis—how easy it is to err, with the best intentions, and how indulgent all of us ought to be, considering the magnitude of this crisis, and the greatness of the task to be undertaken. Sir, it is then with very great reluctance that even now I express my dissent from the course which the right hon. gentleman, the chancellor of the exchequer, proposes to pursue in respect to this vote. I differed, Sir, from the noble lord the member for Lynn some weeks since, when he proposed his measure for the encouragement of railway enterprises in Ireland. The measure of the noble lord was, however, free from some of those objections which I think apply very forcibly to the measure before us now. The noble lord's proposition was a general and impartial measure, giving facilities without any distinction to all railway enterprise in Ireland. Sir, I think our objections are as applicable to the proposal of the right hon. gentleman, the chancellor of the exchequer, if we regard it either as a motion involving a principle in itself indefinite—namely, as applying to all railways which fulfil the conditions which these three railways particularly referred to have fulfilled; or if we view the proposal as exhibiting partiality in selecting three particular railways, and giving some of the public money for their encouragement alone, excluding at the same time all other railways that may hereafter entitle themselves to the same encouragement by the performance of the same conditions. Now that which makes me hesitate in giving a vote for the motion of the right hon. gentleman is this—that, in 1844, I thought it my duty on the part of the government to make a proposition to that railway company, which I must say had first set the example in Ireland, of great personal exertions and great enterprise. I did, Sir, in the year 1844, make such a proposition to that particular railway, as to justify them in the expectation, that if they completed a portion of their line by their own exertions—if they opened it to the public, and thus entitled themselves to give full and ample security to the government, that the treasury would be willing to receive favourably any applications on their part to the government for assistance. But that railway company declined to accept the aid of the government, as they thought they could borrow money under more favourable circumstances. And, therefore, finding now that other railway companies must borrow money, paying 8 per cent. on the principal advanced—having declined the offer of the government when the money could have been advanced without material loss—I do not think it right, Sir, that this particular railway company should now come to the government, at a time when the interest has advanced to 8 per cent., and ask them to fulfil their original offer. Then with respect to the two other railway companies to which the right hon. gentleman proposes loans. What is the principle involved in respect to them? Although the sums proposed to be advanced to them may not amount to more than £100,000, yet still I think that there are evil consequences to be dreaded from selecting two railways in particular for government aid, unless we are prepared—if other railways fulfil the same conditions which these two have complied with—to expend the same amount of money in their favour. But the objection which weighs with me especially, is the particular moment that has been selected for bringing forward this proposition. I must say that I concur in opinion with my hon. friend near me in thinking that this is a time of peculiar and special embarrassment. We are aware, Sir, that the Bank of England has thought it necessary to reduce the amount of her securities by £3,000,000. I am of opinion that this sudden reduction in the public securities has led materially to the present panic. I think, however, that this panic is entirely



unjustified by any real cause. But still, it is important to remember, that since the proposal of the noble lord the member for Lynn was made to this House, exchequer-bills have been hovering between a premium and a discount. Since that motion was made, there has been an increase in the interest of exchequer-bills. Now, notwithstanding that increase in the exchequer-bills, within the last two or three days they have varied between 2s. and 10s. discount. The loan, too, which the right hon. gentleman has so recently obtained, is at present at a discount of 3 per cent. Are those persons to be subjected to loss who were willing to come forward and aid the government—for a profitable return to themselves, it may be urged—but still they were willing to come forward and aid the State? It is rather hard upon them to subject them, without previous notice, to a loss. I believe it is highly necessary that the government should receive general confidence with respect to the particular measures they propose for arresting the famine in Ireland. It may be said that in respect to these railways there is made out a special case for government assistance, which is peculiarly called for in the present awful emergency in Ireland. But against that argument I urge this objection—that the labour to be given on these railways is not an effectual mode of relieving the distress that prevails. I thought, in the first place, it was admitted that the true policy of railway contractors, even if the State lends its aid to them, is to employ the best skilled labour that can be found in the neighbourhood; and that it would be unwise to bring from a distance the father of a family, from Connaught to Munster; and I thought that it was generally admitted that the labour employed on railways was not the most efficacious mode of relieving the distress. This objection applies with still greater force to the proposal of the right hon. gentleman. It is not, however, so much on that account that I dissent from the proposal, as on account of the present peculiar crisis of the country. It was of importance to Ireland, as well as to the other parts of the empire, to maintain the public credit. I am, therefore, sorry that the right hon. gentleman has thought it necessary to make this proposal. Desirous as I am to give my support to the present government during this crisis, and do all I can to maintain public credit, I do find it impossible to give my vote in favour of the present proposition. I did venture to intimate an opinion against the policy of the measure proposed for the culture of waste lands in Ireland. I told the noble lord that he would find greater difficulties than he anticipated in attempting to deal with this question. The announcement made this night by the right hon. gentleman the chancellor of the exchequer has rather confirmed me in the impression I entertained. Perhaps the right hon. gentleman may use the specious and captivating argument—namely, “We have given £8,000,000 for the relief of Ireland. I will not say anything now of the public works. The soup-kitchens will not cost as much money as we supposed; let me then spend a portion of the public money upon the Irish railways.” Now, I confess I always hear such an argument with the greatest suspicion. If you have this money to spare, then, I say, it is your duty to increase the balance in the exchequer; and to dispense with the necessity of asking assistance from the Bank of England. Nothing can be more dangerous than an argument like this—namely, “I have got £8,000,000 for Ireland. There are not as many demands to meet as I expected; therefore, I need be less economical than I otherwise must have been. I expect, then, that the House of Commons will listen to this application for a loan of £620,000 on behalf of Irish railways.” It is because the House of Commons has been willing to give way—because they have been liberal—it is on that very account that it is more incumbent on you to apply every saving you have, not to another species of expenditure, but to diminish the public liabilities. I do not blame the right hon. gentleman for withdrawing the Waste Lands Bill, if he found that from unexpected difficulties he was unable to bring it forward in such a shape as to entitle him to support; on the contrary, I think he acted a manly part in taking that course. It is on other grounds that I object to the present measure. I think that if you give any advance of this kind, it should be an advance in which all parts of the United Kingdom should share, giving the same security for repayment; and I must object to any grant from which Scotland and England are excluded. I do not see how you can withhold the same assistance from the proprietors of Scotch railways, who are making great exertions, and whose works are carried on in a country suffering under great distress. But

the proprietors of this southern Irish railway will not have us think that they are dependent solely on Irish capitalists, but tell us that a large proportion of their shares are in the hands of great English capitalists. Now, if this be the fact—if this Dublin and Cashel Railway does really belong, not to these destitute shareholders, on whom the right hon. gentleman was so severe on a late occasion, but to the right hon. gentleman behind me—[Mr. Hudson made a gesture of dissent.] I know the right hon. gentleman always disclaims having a share in any Irish railway; but if it belongs to men like the right hon. gentleman—sagacious men, men of substance, not resident in Ireland, but good speculators with a view to gain—if these are the men who hold the chief shares in this railway company, upon what possible ground do you propose that they should be allowed to borrow money at five per cent., when all the world besides are paying eight? Upon these grounds, though not without reluctance, I must record my vote against this proposition. With respect to another proposition brought under discussion, that of the currency, I think I could have resisted the temptation of a single member for Birmingham; but the spur in each flank is too much for me. I think this a very inappropriate occasion for a general debate on the currency and monetary system. [Mr. Spooner: I did not begin it.] No, but the hon. member sanctioned it by following the example set by others; besides, he is a high authority, and represents a constituency having the strongest feeling on the subject. I do not wish to be provoked into a general discussion, but it is impossible that I should preserve an entire silence. The hon. member made me a sort of promise that, if I would tell him what a pound was at the time of the Conquest, he would tell me what he, or any other banker means, when he issues a note to the public, and says, "I promise to pay £5." I ask him what are the £5 which you promise to pay? It seems a simple question, particularly for a banker; but he says I am an insidious man, and he cannot trust himself to answer me. A pound at the time of the Conquest—and various other times since the Conquest—I can tell the hon. gentleman, may have varied in the quantity of metal; but it always meant this, a definite quantity of the precious metals. Originally it was a pound in weight, from which, I presume, it took its denomination. There may have been a silver standard and a gold standard, and the coinage may have been defective and worn. I know there are advocates of a worn coinage as well as of £1 notes; but since the time of Elizabeth, the policy and intention of the law has always been that the standard of value should be a given weight of the precious metals. The hon. member says that if Mr. Pitt had been asked what a pound meant, and had attempted to have given an answer, in 1797, the consequence would have been that this country would have been lowered in the scale of nations; and, to cap the climax, I should not be sitting where I am. I am satisfied, however, that if anybody had asked Mr. Pitt, when he proposed the Bank Restriction Act, "Is it your intention to establish an inconvertible paper currency?" his answer would have been, "God forbid!" The restriction placed on the bank in 1797, was never intended to continue beyond the war; but see the evil of a first departure from principle. That the glories of that war were owing to the issue of inconvertible paper, I will not undertake to say; but this I will undertake to say, that the social condition of the country was most materially impaired by it; and I can tell the hon. member that the class which suffered most from it, was that class which receives the wages of labour. [Mr. Spooner: No.] Not the class which receives the wages of labour! Why, I could prove most decidedly to the hon. member, that while the wages of labour nominally remained the same, their command of the necessaries of life was greatly reduced. But my hon. friend confesses that, notwithstanding all the glories of the war, the currency before 1819 was most imperfect. In what respect? It was inconvertible. What course would my hon. friend then have taken in 1819? The hon. member referred to a letter of mine to the inhabitants of Elbing, declaring that the value of paper money should be equivalent to that of coin; and I believe he has correctly represented the sentiments expressed by me on that occasion. "Equivalent in value to coin!" exclaims my hon. friend triumphantly, "why I will prove to you that at eight different periods the rate of interest has varied." Was there ever such an argument heard as to assert that, because the rate of interest varied at eight different times, the intrinsic value of money varied also? I quite understand my hon. friend arguing that, in 1819, it was unwise to restore the gold

standard. My hon. friend must say, that the debt during the war was contracted in paper, and that paper is not an equivalent for gold, although nominally it professes to be so; and that, therefore, when you made the arrangement of the currency, you ought to have adopted as a standard, not gold at £3 : 17 : 10½ an ounce, but gold at £5 an ounce, or something or other, which, according to my hon. friend, might represent the depreciation of paper which took place during the war. That argument I understand; but, with the exception of pecuniary engagements, it is a matter of utter indifference, provided you pay your promissory notes in coin, whether you adopt the gold standard of £3 : 17 : 10½ an ounce, or £4; and it would be no relief to the present difficulties—it would be no relief to the embarrassments under which commerce is labouring—if the standard were £4 or £5 instead of £3 : 17 : 10½. Foreigners would know the value of your currency, and would make a deduction. You may debase coin as you please for the payment of internal debts; but it is a matter of utter indifference to the pressure on the bank in a time of commercial difficulty, provided you have, instead of an inconvertible paper currency, an obligation, at some time or other, to pay in coin the holder of the note which promises to pay. Would my hon. friend now undertake to revise the arrangement of 1819? because that is the question. If he would not do that, and deprecate an inconvertible currency, my hon. friend has no remedy whatever to propose. If, indeed, you will issue £1 notes, and will encourage the export of your gold circulation, that for a time will give some relief; but if you maintain convertible paper, and are not prepared to revise all the transactions—not only those which preceded 1819, but the countless mass of transactions which have taken place since 1819—no proposal which my hon. friend made or hinted at to-night will have the slightest effect in diminishing such difficulties. Every transfer which has taken place in the funds since 1819—the purchase of funded property—is paid for according to the appreciated currency; and every man who has bought an estate, or made a mortgage, has acted on the same basis. The transaction since 1819 infinitely exceed in value and amount those before 1819: and is it possible that the most strenuous opponent of the propriety of the arrangement of 1819 can now advise us to a totally contrary adjustment of all the money transactions? With respect to the bill of 1844, my hon. friend admits that, in order to maintain the standard of 1819, the bill of 1844 was necessary. He has not a fault to find with the act of 1844, unless you are prepared to supersede the arrangement of 1819. The object of the act of 1844 has been completely misunderstood. The main object of that act was to secure the convertibility of paper into gold. Another object was to have such a currency as should ensure to the holder of paper a full equivalent for the nominal value; and, at the same time, not to restrict the ordinary operations of commerce in this great country. My firm belief is, that the act of 1844 has imposed no such restriction. It is a perfectly erroneous view of the act of 1844 to say that it contains some self-acting principle, and relieves the Bank of England from all responsibility. I totally deny the right of the Bank of England to relief from responsibility in carrying out the act of 1844. The issue department works itself. That is quite clear; there is a self-acting principle there. The amount of notes issued from the issue department of the bank is governed by law, and in that respect the bank has no discretion; but the bank has a discretion to exercise in the banking department. The bank is responsible for the general superintendence of the monetary concerns of this country; the bank has the power, by foresight and caution, of preventing ultimate embarrassment; the bank has the power of unduly increasing the circulation, and of unduly restricting it; and I do understand that the bank recognised the principle upon which the act of 1844 was founded, and acknowledged the obligation to conduct its concerns with some reference to the exchanges. The bank directors require no testimony from me of their high honour. I never can speak of the Bank of England without bearing my testimony to the honour of those concerned. I speak of any conduct of the bank with great hesitation; but I am bound to say that so far from thinking anything which is now occurring to be an impeachment of the act of 1844—I say that both the time of prosperity and this present time of adversity convince me that the principles of that act are founded in sound policy, and that they ought to be, as far as we are aware, strictly maintained on that account; and that as to the present difficulty in which the commercial world is placed, the rigid

observance of the general principles on which that act is founded would have prevented it. The act of 1844 never professed to teach the people of this country—at least not to inculcate upon them as a duty—the necessity of caution; and I must say, that I think there has been, on the part of almost all the community, a great disregard of indications of danger which have been perfectly legible since the month of August, 1846, when there was the notoriety of a great failure in the harvest, and the perfect assurance that an unusual and almost unprecedented quantity of food would be required, not to be provided for by the ordinary operations of commerce—those ordinary operations being themselves impeded by circumstances which have been referred to, viz., the enormous amount of capital devoted to railways—laying, it is true, the foundation of prosperity, but accompanied with these disadvantages. Everybody has been desirous of a share in the profit of railways. I think it most important that the capital of the country should rather be employed in railways than in foreign speculations; but still it has a tendency to derange commercial transactions. What is now the fact? Why, the community have become all borrowers, and have not been, I think, sufficiently attentive to the signs of the times. Allow me also to say, with all deference and respect to the bank, that I think the bank also was unmindful of the signs of the times. The bank, at the beginning of this year, in the month of January, was exposed to a drain from the continent for a period of not less than twelve months. It was the special duty of the bank, as superintending the monetary concerns of the country, to make early provision for the danger. I cannot understand why the bank should not have raised the rate of discount; and I totally differ from the hon. gentleman as to its being the duty of the bank to put out as much money as they can. I should be exceedingly sorry if that were the principle on which the bank acted. If the bank may at all times issue large sums on discount, charging only 2 or 3 per cent., what does the bank do? It draws from the money-broker and discount houses; it attracts to itself a great portion of their valuable custom. They are induced to deal with the bank from their respect for the concern, and its undoubted credit; but they establish a claim on the bank; and you cannot draw from great houses their commerce without preferring a claim for accommodation from the bank. If the bank were suddenly to turn round and refuse that accommodation, it would appear to act with great harshness, and in a manner opposed to the true interests of its proprietors. But, as I said before, the bank is not relieved from the peculiar obligation imposed upon it. The bank would be offended with any one who should say that it might remain as indifferent as a private bank to the state of the currency, and that it had no right to exercise any influence over the monetary affairs of the country. As far as I can judge, I am inclined to think it would have been much better if the bank had raised the rate of discount in January last to 5 per cent., or to 6 per cent., or to any other amount which the necessity of the case might have required, rather than impose any arbitrary restrictions on the date of bills. I believe that, with a timely precaution on the part of the bank—such as would have been fairly justified by the indications of the times—the difficulties which have since arisen, would have been, if not altogether prevented, at least very materially diminished. The bank may have a statement to make which would be a sufficient justification of the course it has pursued; but, speaking from the information I now possess, I must say, with all respect for the bank authorities, that their continuing their rate of discount for several weeks at 4 per cent., with a great and uninterrupted drain of gold taking place—I must say that I do not think that was a wise course; and I believe that it has precipitated, and indeed that it has been the chief cause of, the embarrassment of the last few weeks. If you are to have a bank for regulating your monetary affairs, you must be prepared for relaxations and fluctuations in its transactions. It is quite evident that no monetary regulations, that no act imposing restrictions on banks of issue, will prevent the natural consequences of excitement and speculation; and unless our banks made timely provision—unless they disregard clamour—unless they take early precautions—depend upon it, if your currency be convertible, the necessity for restrictions will return in an aggravated form, increasing the difficulties under which all classes of the community labour. That is inevitable. Sir, I may be supposed to speak with a natural prepossession in favour of the bill of which I was the immediate author; but I can say

with perfect truth, that if I thought that any meddling with that bill—that any relaxation of the bill—would be any real remedy for the present embarrassment, or any effectual cure for the present panic, no paternal regard for that bill would prevent me for one moment from advising its relaxation. But my firm belief is, that no relief would be derived from any meddling with that act. Your exchanges would not bear any great increase of your paper currency. You have now £9,000,000 or £10,000,000 of gold; you are at all events free from that which you had at former periods of commercial embarrassment—you are free from any internal panic as to the solvency of the bank. Take care that, in the hope of relieving present difficulties by an increase of paper, and an advance of exchequer-bills, or by permitting the bank to issue £16,000,000 instead of £14,000,000 on securities—take care that you do not incur the further dangers of depreciating your currency and causing a demand to be made on the bank, not in consequence of any import of food, but in consequence of the discredit of the bank. Sir, if it be true that the present state of trade—I mean of course speculative trade—is satisfactory; if it be true that the bank is perfectly solvent, and that the value of your paper currency is fully maintained—if it be true that the wages of labour are paid in a medium which ensure to the holder a full equivalent in articles of subsistence for his labour—I do earnestly entreat the House not to be tempted by any hope of solving present difficulties to encounter the infinitely greater danger than any now existing, which you must incur if you so depreciate your currency that the bank will not be able to maintain the payment of its paper in gold, as it professes to maintain it. I do earnestly hope that you will not again expose yourselves to all those evils from which you have escaped since 1819, with so much pain and suffering, and which you cannot again encounter without shaking the foundations of the prosperity of the country, and greatly lowering the condition of all classes of the people.

The committee divided: Ayes, 208; Noes, 75; majority, 133. Resolution agreed to, and the House resumed.

## COLONISATION.

JUNE 1, 1847.

The Earl of Lincoln rose, and submitted the following motion to the House:—“That an humble Address be presented to her Majesty, praying that she will take into her most gracious consideration the means by which colonisation may be made subsidiary to other measures for the improvement of the social condition of Ireland; and by which, consistently with full regard to the interests of the colonies themselves, the comfort and prosperity of those who emigrate may be effectually promoted.”

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, I think the House may take it for granted, that whatever arguments could be adduced against the proposition of my noble friend, have been brought forward by the right hon. gentleman who has just sat down (Mr. Vernon Smith). He is a gentleman of great acuteness, great ability, great knowledge of the subject, and great power of stating his views. He has the advantage of having served in the colonial office, and becoming acquainted with the details of this subject; and he possesses the other important advantage of retirement from office, thus being possessed of an opportunity of considering the question maturely—an opportunity which those who are engaged in the various details of office cannot command. The right hon. gentleman having an active mind, official experience, and the inestimable advantage of leisure, has been enabled to consider this subject in all its bearings, and it is therefore to be supposed that he has brought forward against the proposition of my noble friend the most forcible arguments. I now propose to review the arguments which the right hon. gentleman adduced; and I take first in order, that which he has urged against those who in opposition take up the subject of colonisation. He says, that those who are in opposition, are always ready to take up the question, and call it colonisation; but the moment they take office, they immediately see many good reasons against colonisation, and the question in their hands dwindles into emigration—that all the grand hopes of colonisation held out by the plans of those in opposition, dwindle into the small realities of emi-

gration when they get into office. What, I ask, is the reason of this? Is not one reason, that the duties of office are now so burdened with details, that it is impossible for those who have to consider those details, to make sufficient inquiries into the subject to enable them to bring forward an efficient measure? The right hon. gentleman has stated, that Lord Howick proposed one, and that the judge-advocate proposed another; that all their speeches were in favour of colonisation when they were not in office, but that when they obtained office they abandoned their schemes, and allowed them to dwindle into emigration plans. If that be so, then, I ask, is it not time to adopt some other course? Is it not time to see whether or not some plan might not be adopted which would be practicable, if the magnificent plans of those who are in opposition are found to be impracticable by those in office? If that be so, is it not time that we should adopt some alternative such as my noble friend suggests, between the large promises of the opposition, and the small propositions of the government? The argument of the right hon. gentleman is, in fact, the strongest argument in favour of the adoption of another and a better system, than that which now prevails. Well, what is his second argument? It is this: He says, that at present we conduct our emigration badly; that we leave it to individuals; that those individuals go without proper concert to other countries; and that they go without any plan such as they formerly had when persons of talent went out, and surrounded themselves with their dependants and friends, and established themselves in different colonies. That, he says, was the plan which was adopted in ancient times; and, if it were so, does it not establish a sufficient ground for an inquiry, whether we should not adopt a plan for the establishment of a better constituted system of emigration? The right hon. gentleman says, that there are many grievances connected with our present system, and that we failed, not because of the lapse of time, since a more successful system was adopted; not because of the change of circumstances—for he states, that a neighbouring country, within a short sail of this, conducts its plan of colonisation, not emigration, on a principle of which he approves—a principle something similar to that which was adopted in Pennsylvania, namely, taking out spiritual conductors with the emigrants, and providing that they shall go in an aggregate and social character. His next argument was this—that if the noble lord will withdraw his motion, he will just be pursuing the course which has always been pursued on former occasions. He says, “A gentleman brings forward a motion, disturbs the public mind, makes a very long speech, shows himself to be a perfect master of the subject, leads the public to believe that really we are foregoing great advantages, which by a little attention we might realize; but he withdraws his motion in despair, in consequence of discouragement on the part of the government;” and he says, that if my noble friend follows that course, he will be following in the beaten and unprofitable track. I must confess, I never heard a more inconclusive reason why a motion should be withdrawn; and yet, that was his third argument, for the right hon. gentleman proceeded, like a great orator, from one position to another, reserving his climax to the last. I think, if he had left the argument there, it would have been conclusive. But not so; so determined was he that there should not be a loophole of escape from him, that he went on to review the course which other projectors of plans of emigration had taken. He said, first of all, there was the scheme of the judge-advocate, who laid down general principles of emigration; but then, he said, the government were wise enough to challenge that right hon. gentleman to propose his particular scheme, and he was unwise enough to fall into that trap, and propose a plan of emigration which was referred to the colonial office; and the colonial office having a good deal of official experience, contrived to damage the plan in all its details; and having proved that this was the cause of the failure of the judge-advocate, the right hon. gentleman blames my noble friend for taking warning by that example, and not being prepared with the plan which the hon. gentleman the under secretary (Mr. Hawes) expected—which he was greatly disappointed at not receiving—and which, not having, he was obliged to say, towards the middle of his speech, “A deputation waited upon some member of the government and suggested a plan, which I should be too happy on the present occasion to have the opportunity of attributing to the noble lord, and then disposing of it.” But my noble friend took warning by that example, though still believing that there is a strong impression on the part of the

public, that a plan might be devised, and that you need not have a long roving commission; for you will find very able men now in the colonies, I apprehend, who will be able to give you a good deal of information, with respect to the feeling of the colonies upon the subject—more, perhaps, than the hon. gentleman is aware of—and only on this account, that the hon. gentleman is so overwhelmed by having the charge of the practical details of some thirty or forty colonies, that he really has not the opportunity of making those inquiries which are necessary. Then, as to the reflection upon the government, I do think, all our discussions with reference to the state of Ireland, have been conducted with an absence of party feeling, which must have convinced the government that we would not pander to any such disposition. There has been a full recognition of the difficulties under which the government labour: even if they fail, every disposition has been shown to impute their failure, not to negligence or want of ability, but to the force of circumstances which no human ingenuity could control; and it is not likely, that at the close of the session, a motion would be brought forward implying censure upon them. With respect to the noble lord at the head of the colonial department, I will say that for experience and ability to form a judgment upon a matter of this kind, I know no person who ever held that office upon whom in that respect I should be more unwilling to pass or to imply a reflection. But really the reason why we have not addressed ourselves practically to this matter is, that it is almost impossible for the government to make those full inquiries which are absolutely necessary. But I was diverted from following the right hon. gentleman: after he had done with the judge-advocate, he came to Earl Grey. Now, if he had said, “Earl Grey has been a most successful proposer of plans: he is in office, he has proposed plans that are now in operation, and will probably be crowned with success;” then I could have understood the reason why a commission should not be appointed; but, says the right hon. gentleman, “Earl Grey, the secretary for the colonies, absolutely proposed a plan in December last which he found it necessary to abandon in January.” Why, if the secretary of state himself, with all his access to official information, with the command, and with the facilities which his office give, proposed a plan of emigration within a short period after his accession to power which he found it necessary to give up, surely that, though no reason why we should abandon the consideration of the question of colonisation, is a decisive proof of the difficulty of practically dealing with the subject. Then the right hon. gentleman turns to the Irish members, and he says there will be £9,000,000 wanted for the perfection of Mr. Godley’s plan. I do not think it at all likely they will be called upon for £9,000,000 to carry out Mr. Godley’s or any other plan; but this is of importance to us, that the Irish members have said in discussion, “We expect such benefits will result from opening to Irishmen an access to other countries, that we are willing to take upon us the charge of that experiment.” The right hon. gentleman says, that in the present state of incumbrances upon landed property, in consequence of the relief rate for the public works, he doubts if the Irish will be able to pay that £9,000,000. They may not be able to pay that sum; but still it may be possible to realize some advantage. Even if you open an avenue to the departure of 300,000 persons, instead of 2,000,000, and locate them in a position of which they shall be able to report favourably, you are doing ten times more for the advantage of Ireland than if you had sent out 2,000,000 at once. In my opinion any sudden transport or emigration of 2,000,000 from Ireland, we being uncertain of the issue of that experiment, would do little good. But if you begin with even 40,000; if you overcome prejudices; if you settle a small number in a remote country where they are enabled to make a favourable report; and if thus you open a permanent and constantly progressing outlet for the population in Ireland, then you will in my opinion not only be laying a foundation for the cure of evils prevailing in that country, but establishing new bonds of connection between this empire and those colonies. It is most gratifying, I think, that such remittances have been made from Irishmen settled in Canada and the United States, for the purpose of aiding their distressed countrymen at home. I think it is most honourable to their character, and I feel that it is most encouraging to colonisation. It is showing that Irishmen are not inferior to the men of any other country. Why we have been told to-night, that the lady said, they must get Paddy to lead the way in Australia. And if you can enable the people of Ireland in periods

of distress to draw upon their fellow-countrymen in distant lands, and prevail upon those countrymen to invite them there, I say nothing can be more encouraging to emigration. I must here also say, I think the conduct of citizens of the United States, in remitting the contributions which they sent across the Atlantic, does entitle them to the expression of our approbation and our thanks. It is not the amount of money that has been sent over—this country might have contributed the money; what I prize is the charitable and friendly motive from which it has been done. It is a proof that there is a sympathy between the Anglo-Saxon race on this side of the water, and on the other. There may be some persons who have done it for less praiseworthy ends; persons may have come over here, and made parade of bringing sums of money, but that is not to prejudice us against the rest. This, I know, that there have been remitted unostentatiously, and purely from charitable motives and feelings, to members of the society of friends, sitting in Dublin on a relief committee—remitted from parties who never expected their names to be mentioned—supplies of food to the value of £57,000. I was so informed by a gentleman, whose name I will mention, Mr. Jonathan Pym, who has been making great exertions for the relief of the distress in Ireland; and who stated to me that to that body sitting in Dublin, consisting, so far as its management is concerned, though not so far as contributions are concerned, of members of the society of friends, not less than £57,000 had been sent by citizens of the United States, probably a great many of them members of the society of friends, for the relief of that distress; and, as I have said, from no other motive whatever except the dictates of humanity. Now, I do hope that the noble lord will bear in mind the conduct which we have pursued with respect to him and his government upon these questions; and if he thinks there is really a ground for doubt upon this subject, that he will give the benefit of that doubt to a proposal for inquiry, which is suggested for the purpose of facilitating the adoption of some plan upon this subject. It is not for the purpose of any triumph over a government which is placed in difficulties with regard to Ireland; but I entreat the noble lord to consider what is the evidence we have of the state of that country—what a prospect there is of the failure of the potato crop; and even if not of that, yet of such a heavy demand upon property for the purpose of supporting poverty in Ireland, that the government of the noble lord will be perplexed with a choice between two lines of conduct, either strictly to enforce the law, or to abandon all claim to that which is due. I do think that the abandonment of that claim will involve greater evil than the mere loss of the money; I should not half so much regret the loss of the money as I should fear the consequences of teaching the people to draw largely upon the fund placed within their reach in the expectation that when the pinching time of payment comes, the claim will be remitted. It is not fair towards this country. I believe that our best plan would have been, if we could have foreseen all that has taken place, for this country to make up its mind what sum it should absolutely give—to say, “Of the £8,000,000 we are ready to give £5,000,000, for England, towards the relief of your distress; provide the other £3,000,000, but we will not place England in the relation of a creditor towards Ireland.” I deprecate that position—for this country to have a very heavy claim upon Ireland for the repayment of money. I would much rather that a sum had been absolutely given *ab initio*, than there should be any sort of secret understanding that it was not to be repaid, or any expectation on the part of the Irish people that they might deal very liberally with these funds, because the time of repayment might never come. We have had experience enough to make us dread the periodical spectacle of 1,000,000 or 1,500,000 of people absolutely starving; a spectacle so disgraceful, and its consequences so replete with danger and insecurity of life and property, that we are bound to provide that the people shall not be left to starve; but, believing it to be absolutely necessary to give some new stimulus, and feeling that we must look to placing the landowner and occupier there in a new position, I cannot help thinking that the mass of destitution will be so great for some time to come, that if any means can be devised for facilitating the operation of the measures which have had the assent of this House, those means should be carefully adopted. Is not this subject, at any rate, worth inquiring into? It is proved that there are 2,000,000 of people for whom there is not now profitable employment, and who must for some time to come continue to be a heavy burden; it is known at the same time that you have magnificent colonies on



the other side of the water—6,000,000 of unoccupied acres in one district. Now, put these facts together—that in Ireland, the nearest part of your dominions to America, you have this mass of unemployed population, and that on the other side of the Atlantic you have magnificent provinces imperfectly peopled. If you can add to their population by measures grateful to the colonies, you will be materially adding to the strength of these provinces of the British Crown. It is admitted that the government will have forthwith to devise some satisfactory plan of emigration; and it is not too much to ask that the government will consent to this resolution. It is from no want of confidence in the government that I support it, because the resolution leaves in their own hands the appointment of the commissioners, who would merely inquire into the subject, and report whether some progress had not been made, and should not further be made, to relieve Ireland, and at the same time strengthen our colonies, by sending thither the redundant population of Ireland. We want the adoption of no scheme, but only that the subject should be inquired into. It is truly said in the report of your emigration commissioners, that, connected with Australia, one peculiarity is, that emigration to that colony entirely originated with the government. You have here a colony four times the distance that Canada is from the mother country, and hear what those commissioners say of the result:—“Of the emigration to Australia, one peculiarity has been that it entirely originated with government. Usually the part of the government, for obvious reasons, has been to follow in the course of private enterprise, and supply any amount of direction or control which circumstances may require. But no one ever thought it worth while to provide accommodation to Australia for emigrants of the humblest class; all seemed to feel that even on the most economical scale, persons of that description were never likely to be able to pay the expense of their own conveyance to the furthest settlement on the globe. It was only after the government had resolved in 1831 to try the experiment of disposing of its lands in Australia by sale, and applying the proceeds to emigration, that shipowners were induced by communications from the government to make the experiment of providing steerage passages of the cheapest description. The price, which had never before been less than from £35 to £40, was then at once reduced to £20. And we may mention here, that in the course of subsequent experience, it has sometimes been reduced, when a large emigration was in progress, to £15 to New South Wales, and even so low, under peculiar circumstances, as £12 and £13 to Western Australia and South Australia. . . . In order to show how far the attention bestowed on Australian emigration led to improvements in the art of conveying the people successfully, we may be permitted so far to enter into detail as to mention, that in the government emigration which falls within our own knowledge, there has been a progressive and unceasing diminution in the rate of mortality; and that this rate, which in 1838 was so high as 4·84 per cent., was in 1839 reduced to 2·71 per cent.; and in a small emigration last year to South Australia was no more than ·62 per cent. In 641 souls, the only deaths were of three children and one infant. We believe that the passage to Australia may now be made by large bodies of the labouring classes with less risk of death by disease, than amongst the same number of persons living on shore in England.”

Why, give me three respectable gentlemen who shall be in the entire confidence of the government, such men as Colonel Torrens and Mr. Hutt, who have watched the progress of emigration to South Australia, and who know the difficulties it experienced, and let them say whether it is not possible for you to conduct an emigration upon the same principle to Canada and Nova Scotia as to the other colonies where it has succeeded. If they show that this is possible, then let the government proceed to take the necessary steps to carry it into effect. The right hon. gentleman says that emigration to South Australia failed at first, but that you sent out a good governor; that through Captain Grey all difficulties had been overcome; and that by his energy he had converted what had been a colony of despairing paupers into a colony which boasted an affluent and prosperous population. Well, why can you not have a good governor in Canada also? You have sent Captain Grey to New Zealand, and I have no doubt he will make it prosper as well as South Australia. Be it so. Then, the original difficulty to the success of emigration has been inherent in the character of the governors of our colonies, rather than in the plan of colonisa-

tion. I am convinced that there are no difficulties that resolution and good sense will not overcome. Surely, then, you can find other Governor Greys in the Queen's dominions who might conduct an experiment in Canada upon the principle that has succeeded in South Australia. You have one now in Canada who will no doubt show equal intelligence, equal energy and resolution, to Captain Grey. You may devise a scheme which will enable you to look forward to the willing consent of our fellow-subjects in the colonies; and under Lord Elgin there is no reason why emigration to Canada should not be as prosperous as to South Australia. There are many causes in its favour. The passage is cheaper, the facilities for the passage are greater, and the feeling of common association is quite as strong. I am convinced that the addition to the prosperity of the colony will be at least as great; but if, as I believe will be the case, you infuse a loyal and grateful population into the Canadas by this means, then my confidence in the permanence of the connection of the Canadas with this country will be not only increased, but will be so confirmed that I believe it will be perpetual. You should take measures for a continually fresh infusion of colonists, who should be received into the nucleus of the older colonists, and live in relations of affection with them. I say nothing as to the past opinion which hon. gentlemen may have expressed upon colonisation. I trust that the noble lord will defer to what is, I think, the general sense of the House, and enable us to try whether, after repeated failures, we cannot devise some plan in the present imminent crisis of Ireland which will relieve her of her redundant population, and transfer to our distant colonies a people grateful for their escape from present danger, and attached to their Queen and constitution.

After a short discussion the motion was agreed to.

## COMMERCIAL DISTRESS.

DECEMBER 3, 1847.

In the debate on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's motion, "That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the causes of the recent commercial distress, and how far it has been affected by the laws for regulating the issue of bank-notes payable on demand,"—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: I trust, Sir, that any observations which I may have to make upon the subject under the consideration of the House will be made in that temperate and dispassionate spirit which characterised the speeches of the noble lord (Lord J. Russell), and my right hon. friend the member for Stamford (Mr. Herries); and I cannot but express, in common with the House generally, my satisfaction at the return to this House of my right hon. friend, and my congratulations that, by his return, the House will have the benefit, on matters of this kind, of his great intelligence and great practical experience. Before I address myself to the immediate subject of the debate, I wish to clear the way by referring to a charge which was made against me last night by the hon. member for Stafford (Mr. Urquhart), and which has been repeated to-night—certainly in the most courteous manner in which it is possible to prefer such an accusation—by the hon. member for Dublin (Mr. Reynolds). The charge made by both those hon. gentlemen is this—that, in bringing forward the act of 1844, as the organ of the government I gave a public assurance that the banking interests of Ireland and of Scotland should not be affected by the measure, but that it should refer exclusively to this part of the United Kingdom. The hon. member for Stafford went so far as to say that an insidious advantage had been taken of Scotland—that the suspicions and jealousies of the people of Scotland, particularly excitable upon the subject of banking and of £1 notes, had been allayed by the assurance thus given by me; and the hon. gentleman declared, in very figurative language, that the banking system of Scotland had received a "stab in the dark." He supported that charge by reference to the 10th clause of the act of 1844, and having asserted that I had publicly declared in 1844 that the banking system of Scotland was not to be in the slightest degree affected by that act, he inquired, "What would the House think of the right hon. gentleman, who, having given that public assurance, inserted in the act surreptitiously the 10th clause,

which provided that no banker not issuing notes in May, 1844, in any part of the United Kingdom, should be allowed thereafter to issue notes?" The hon. gentleman supported that charge by reference to the speech which I made, and he quoted an extract from that speech to this effect:—"Of Ireland and Scotland I have made no mention. I propose to reserve for separate legislation the state of the currency in each of those parts of the United Kingdom."

And certainly from that quotation from the act, supported by that reference to the speech, the House might infer that the accusation was well-founded. But what will the House think of the hon. gentleman, who having read the passage above mentioned from my speech, omitted to read the next, which is to the following effect?—"The prohibition against the establishment of new banks of issue will extend both to Scotland and Ireland; they also will be included in those enactments which will require the performance for the future of certain conditions preliminary to the formation of new joint-stock banks."

Could there be, on the part of a minister bringing forward a measure, a more distinct, public, formal avowal, that, although the currency—the currency under £5 in Ireland and Scotland—was to be reserved for separate legislation, yet that enactment which applied to this country in respect to the prohibition of new banks of issue, should extend to the whole of the United Kingdom? But, moreover, not only was that intimation given by a speech, but it was necessary to found the bill of 1844 upon preliminary resolutions, to which the consent of this House was required; and the eighth resolution, which I moved on the night when I brought forward this question, and which resolution was unanimously assented to by this House—not on the night on which it was offered by me, but after the interval of some days—after it had been printed, after it had been communicated to the Scotch bankers, after it had been published in every newspaper in the United Kingdom—the eighth of the resolutions on which the bill was founded was to this effect:—"Resolved—That it is expedient to prohibit by law the issue of promissory notes payable to bearer on demand, by any bank not issuing such notes on the 6th of May, 1844, or by any bank thereafter to be established in any part of the United Kingdom."

Now, I think that I shall have satisfied the House that if "a stab" were given to the banking system of Scotland, at any rate it was not given "in the dark;" and as the hon. gentleman says that he undertook by a letter, written in 1844, to enlighten the people of Scotland on the subject of the bill of 1844, and to warn them of what might happen in 1845, I will repay his attack upon me by giving him this friendly advice—that when he next addresses the people of Scotland upon the subject of any bill, or of any resolutions that may be pending in this House, he will have the goodness to read the documents on which he comments.

To address myself now to the immediate subject under discussion. The practical question upon which we shall be called upon to vote, is whether or no a committee shall be appointed to consider the commercial distress, including the laws which regulate the banking system of this country. Sir, when the executive government of the country appeals to the House of Commons for the exercise of those powers of inquiry which peculiarly belong to the House of Commons, whatever opinion as individuals we may entertain with respect to the probable advantage of the inquiry, it is difficult on the part of the House of Commons to resist that appeal. The functions of inquiry are constitutional functions committed to us; the executive government is of opinion that there is not ground for legislation without inquiry; the executive government asks our assistance; and I, for one, consider it impossible to refuse that appeal. An amendment has been moved, upon the motion of the chancellor of the exchequer, for restricting the inquiry specifically to the question how far the distress has been caused by the laws which regulate banking. I have had experience enough to know that there is no practical difference between the two proposals. If the hon. gentleman's amendment were carried, it would be quite impossible to exclude from the inquiry, thus nominally restricted, any matters which any hon. member in that committee might consider to be the causes of distress. When I remind the hon. gentleman that in 1836 a committee was appointed with a specific object of inquiry, namely, the laws which regulate banks of issue; and that that committee sat during the whole of 1836, was reappointed in 1837, and did not report till August 1838, I think he will be convinced, with me, that no practical

object is gained by imposing any limitation upon the subjects of inquiry. I therefore shall vote for the proposal of her Majesty's government, thinking that if there is to be an inquiry, no assignable causes of the present commercial difficulty and distress ought to be, or can be, excluded from that inquiry.

Sir, I have no desire to devolve upon other parties, upon whom it does not justly devolve, any share of the responsibility which attaches to me for the part which I have taken, either in respect to the restoration of the standard in the year 1819, or to the attempt to mitigate those evils which accompanied our system of banking and currency previously to the year 1844. I did no more than my duty in 1819 and in 1844 in calling the attention of the House to those subjects; and I not only do not wish to devolve upon others the responsibility for the measures then adopted, but, on adverting to those measures and carefully considering their effects, I do not in the slightest degree regret the course which was taken either in 1819 or 1844. But I must submit to this House, whether it is quite respectful to the character of deliberative assemblies, to attempt to make individual members responsible for some of the most important measures that ever were submitted to parliament, and which received the cordial support of parliament? Individually, you, the members of this House, are in no degree personally responsible for acts done by your predecessors; but in your corporate capacity you are the House of Commons, the same House of Commons which for years has been called upon to deliberate on public affairs; and nothing could more tend to depreciate the character of the House of Commons and the character of the House of Lords, than to countenance an impression that upon matters of this kind, involving the most important public interests, the legislative assemblies of this great empire adopted measures proposed by some individual member without due consideration, and seek to relieve themselves from the responsibility of having accepted and adopted those measures, by the plea of ignorance or inattention to their duty. Why, what is the truth with respect to these measures of 1819 and 1844? In 1819 the measure for the restoration of the standard was proposed by me, a private member of parliament, unconnected by office with the government; it was the result of the inquiries of two committees, one in the House of Commons, one in the House of Lords. The report of the committee of the House of Commons recommending the restoration of the standard, was carried with only one dissentient voice; the report of the committee of the House of Lords was, I believe, unanimous. As the organ of the committee of the House of Commons, I proposed in 1819 the measure for the restoration of the standard of value. There was not one single division against the principle of the bill. So far as the principle was concerned, it received the unanimous concurrence of the House. Objections were stated to details of the measure by the member for Coventry (Mr. Ellice), and also by other members; but, if I recollect right, upon the question whether the bill should be read a second time—whether the bill should be read a third time—there was no division whatever. In the House of Lords the bill also received unanimous acquiescence, excepting indeed that one member of the House of Peers did move an amendment. The bill proposed that cash payments should not be resumed until 1823; Lord Holland proposed as an amendment, that cash payments should be resumed in 1820. He was not content to wait till the year 1823; and the only record of an adverse opinion in the hereditary branch of the legislature is one of dissatisfaction with the late period at which the act was to come into operation. Now, as I am firmly convinced that the restoration of the standard of value, and the mitigation of those evils which were inseparable from inconvertible paper, were wise measures, necessary for the security of property, and for the just remuneration of industry, do not suppose that by referring to these facts I am trying to relieve myself from any responsibility on account of the act of 1819. I have no such desire; but I cannot consent to relinquish for the act of 1819, the weight and authority which it derives from having received the almost unanimous sanction of both Houses of Parliament.

I now come to the act of 1844. There had been a committee in 1840 and 1841, over which the right hon. gentleman the chancellor of the exchequer most ably presided, which had inquired into and reported to the House on the subject which now engages our attention. In 1844 the bank charter was about to expire; some proposition it was necessary to make as to that charter. The choice lay between

the renewal of inquiry, or the proposal of a specific measure for the consideration of parliament. Now, I wish to call the attention of the House to this fact, that in five preceding years five committees sat for the purpose of investigating this subject, of collecting information, and reporting their opinions thereupon to the House. Those committees sat in 1836, in 1837, in 1838, in 1840, and in 1841. Notwithstanding their minute and protracted inquiries, I have heard it said that the subject had not been exhausted, and that the measure of 1844 was not based upon a sufficient inquiry. Yet antecedent to the measure of 1844, there had been an extent of inquiry on the subjects of currency and banking which ought to have sufficed. I find that by the first of these committees not less than 3,000 questions were put; we have in the year 1836, 3,000 questions, and 3,000 answers; in the next year, 1837, the committee which then sat, put 4,570 questions, and received as many answers. But that was not sufficient, for we have in the year 1838 a further supply of questions and answers to the extent of 1,700 of each. Questions and answers without end, but with no practical result from those apparently interminable investigations. In the year 1840, as the period at which the bank charter act could expire drew near, another committee was appointed, over which the right hon. gentleman the chancellor of the exchequer presided with great ability. At that time we had all the information which could be elicited by above 9,000 questions. In 1840 we had 3,859 questions more, to each of which long and reasoned answers were given. In 1841, the committee was again appointed, and having increased the sum of questions to 14,000, closed its labours without any practical result. It might then at all events have been concluded that inquiry into the subject was exhausted. The committees had examined Mr. Tooke, Mr. Jones Loyd, Mr. Horsley Palmer, Mr. Page, and others, the organs of every class of opinions. It was then decided by her Majesty's servants to submit to parliament measures for the regulation of the currency and for the renewal of the bank charter. They invited the House of Commons to come to some practical decision on the subject; and I must be allowed to say, with respect to the measures proposed to parliament in 1844, that there has not been within my recollection any measure of equal importance carried by a larger majority. On no occasion did more than thirty oppose the progress of that measure. In the House of Lords it was carried unanimously, at least without a division. I say again, therefore, that the Houses of Parliament—after the means of information placed within their reach—cannot with any justice allege, that they were betrayed into a hasty and ill-considered judgment. I am quite ready to admit that the whole subject is now open to reconsideration. It would be absurd for any one to demand on such a subject identity of opinions with those held in 1844. Nothing could be more injurious to the public interest, than that members of this House, if honestly convinced of their error, should refuse to come to a different conclusion now from that at which they arrived when they legislated on the subject in 1844. It would be perfectly justifiable for this House, if they should see reason for doing so, to adopt a different measure; but it would not be creditable to the House of Commons to say—"we gave our consent in 1844 blindly and inconsiderately to the measure proposed to us by the minister; and we hold him, and not ourselves, responsible for its adoption." There has been some misapprehension respecting the objects of this act. I do not deny that one of the objects contemplated by the act was the prevention of the convulsions that had heretofore occurred in consequence of the neglect by the Bank of England to take early precautions against the withdrawal of its treasure. I did hope that, although there was no imperative obligation on the Bank of England to take those precautions, that the experience of 1825, 1836, and 1839, would have induced that establishment to conform to principles which the directors of the bank acknowledged to be just, and which they had more than once professed to adopt for their own regulation. Sir, I am bound to say that in that hope, that in that object of the bill, I have been disappointed. I am bound to admit, seeing the extent of commercial depression which has prevailed, and the number of houses which have been swept away—some of which, however, I think were insolvent long before the bill came into operation, and others of which became insolvent in consequence of the failure of those who were connected with them, and were imprudent in their speculations—I am bound to admit that that purpose of the bill of 1844 which sought to impress, if not a legal, at least a moral obligation upon the bank to prevent

the necessity for measures of extreme stringency by timely precautions, has not been fulfilled. So, I must contend that it was in the power of the bank, if not to prevent all the evils that have arisen, at least greatly to diminish their force. If the bank had possessed the resolution to meet the coming danger by a contraction of its issues, by raising the rate of discount, by refusing much of the accommodation which they granted between the years 1844 and 1846—if they had been firm and determined in the adoption of those precautions, the necessity for extrinsic interference might have been prevented; it might not then have been necessary for the government to authorise a violation of the act of 1844.

Sir, it has been said that the avowed object of that act was to establish a complete control over the operations of the Bank of England—to discourage all rash speculations—to prevent the recurrence of panics in the monetary and commercial circles, such as occurred in 1836 and 1839. Now, perhaps, I may be allowed to quote what I said in the course of my speech upon the second reading of the bill, as to its object. I said—"The ministers were not wild enough to suppose that this measure would prevent all undue speculation, or insure an invariable paper currency; but there was a species of speculation dependent on an undue issue of paper which they hoped the measure would check. Speculation could not be prevented in a commercial community, but it might be aggravated by a species of paper credit within the control of parliament; and though ministers did not aim at checking legitimate speculation—though they admitted they could not prevent illegitimate speculation—which was perhaps necessarily incident to mercantile enterprise, particularly in a country like this; still they asked parliament, by assenting to this measure, not to aggravate evils which it could not control, nor refuse to check those which came properly within its jurisdiction."

I say, then, that the bill of 1844 had a triple object. Its first object was that in which I admit it has failed, namely, to prevent by early and gradual, severe and sudden contraction, and the panic and confusion inseparable from it; but the bill had two other objects of at least equal importance; the one to maintain and guarantee the convertibility of the paper currency into gold—the other to prevent the difficulties which arise at all times from undue speculation being aggravated by the abuse of paper credit in the form of promissory notes. In these two objects my belief is, that the bill has completely succeeded. My belief is that you have had a guarantee for the maintenance of the principles of convertibility, such as you never had before; my belief also is, that whatever difficulties you are now suffering, from a combination of various causes, those difficulties would have been greatly aggravated if you had not wisely taken the precaution of checking the unlimited issue of the notes of the Bank of England, of joint-stock banks, and private banks. The hon. member for the city of Dublin (Mr Reynolds) has spoken of the grievous injury sustained by Ireland in consequence of an interference with the constitutional privilege of the Irish banks to conduct their banking concerns as they pleased. I must say that the hon. gentleman's authority in that respect was somewhat weakened by his explaining that privilege to be, that bankers in Ireland might conduct their operations, not upon capital, but upon credit. Now, with very high respect for the hon. gentleman, to which he is no doubt entitled as the founder of the National Bank, I will tell him with all suavity and courtesy, that in his banking capacity I would rather have his capital than his credit. I will give the House a specimen of the injuries sustained in Ireland by this interference with the privileges of Irish banks. If there ever was a country the poorer classes of which have suffered misery and misfortune from the abuse of banking, it is that very country of which the hon. gentleman has spoken. I will show you what it is to establish unrestricted banking upon credit, and not upon capital. I will quote the authority of an Irishman, of Sir Henry Parnell, whose attention had been much given to these subjects. I will read to you what he says respecting the injury Ireland has sustained, not by the limitation of the privilege, but by the failure of the banks in that country:—"Those failures (he says) might be described in a few words"—and certainly more emphatic words for the description of misery, I think were never contained in so short a space—"There were, in 1804, as appears by the report of the committee on Irish banking affairs, fifty registered banks in that country. Since that year a great many more have been established." I should think twenty more, making about seventy banks.

in the whole. Sir Henry Parnell, writing in 1827, says, "With the exception of a few that withdrew from business, and of four banks in Dublin, three in Belfast, and one in Mallow, the whole failed, one after the other, involving the country in immense distress." The whole! ["Hear, hear!"] I recollect myself, the failure, on almost the same day, at least within the same week, of ten or eleven banks in Ireland. I think a little later the failures amounted to twenty, or twenty-one, these banks having an extensive circulation, and possessing the entire confidence, not only of the small farmers, but of the peasantry and cottiers in that part of the country through which their circulation extended. I was in the west of Ireland on that occasion, and I could hardly conceive such desolation and misery as that which was caused by the failure of those banks. I am sure there are many Irishmen who now hear me, who will admit that it is almost impossible for me to overstate the evil consequences that resulted from those failures. When the hon. gentleman tells me, speaking of joint-stock banks in Ireland, that the universal practice previously to the act of 1844, was for those banks to keep in their coffers one-third of gold in reference to the total amount of their issues and liabilities, I am placed in rather an embarrassing situation. Certainly some of those banks communicated to me the amount of their usual stock of gold. My impression is totally at variance with that of the hon. gentleman as to the amount of that stock. What! was it then the practice of the joint-stock banks in Ireland to have in their coffers gold equal to one-third of the aggregate value of their deposits, liabilities, and promissory notes? Had the hon. gentleman told me that their stock of gold was even one-tenth the amount of their total liabilities, I should have thought it was much more in correspondence with the fact. But, one-third! Why, if that were so, the act of 1845 would be a great benefit conferred upon the Irish joint-stock banks. If their practice was to keep so large a proportion of gold in their coffers as compared with their total liabilities, then the act of 1845 relieved them from a very great burden which their own discretion had hitherto imposed upon them. It afforded them facilities for extending their circulation which they had not enjoyed previously to the year 1845. If the statement of the hon. gentleman be true, it is quite clear that the good sense of the Irish banks had established precautions against the demand for gold far beyond those which the act of 1845 contemplated. But were there no exceptions from these wise rules? Did the hon. gentleman ever read the history of the joint-stock agricultural bank of Ireland? Does he think that that bank ever kept in its coffers gold to the amount of one-third of its total liabilities? Does he, in fact, know that such was the course which any bank in Ireland pursued? There is a general disposition to blame the act of 1844. The real truth is, that you are suffering all the difficulties that arise from a diminution of capital, and from a contraction of credit, and your first impulse is to visit with blame that measure which, in point of fact, has prevented your difficulties from being ten times greater than they would have been. Some eighty years ago, the greatest writer that ever treated upon the subject of political economy—the author who stands in the same relation of pre-eminence to all those who have subsequently written upon that subject in which Sir Isaac Newton stands to his followers, in the sublimer science of astronomy, made the following observations:—"No complaint is more common than that of a scarcity of money. Money, like wine, must always be scarce with those who have neither wherewithal to buy it, nor credit to borrow it. Those who have either, will seldom be in want of the money or of the wine which they have occasion for. This complaint, however, of the scarcity of money is not always confined to improvident spendthrifts; it is sometimes general through a whole mercantile town and the country in its neighbourhood. Over-trading is the common cause of it. Sober men, whose projects have been disproportioned to their capitals, are as likely to haven either wherewithal to buy money, nor credit to borrow it, as prodigals, whose expense has been disproportioned to their revenue. Before their projects can be brought to bear, their stock is gone, and their credit with it. They run about every where to borrow money, and every body tells them that they have none to lend."

That is the precise condition in which we are at present. We are running about to borrow money, and every body tells us they have none to lend. The dearth of money is a dearth of capital. You blame the law, or you blame the government, because they cannot supply you with that which you really want—available capital

to meet your exigencies. Nothing can be more delusive than the expectation you entertain, that if either parliament or government should give way to the foolish demand of increasing the currency, they would thereby supply the want of capital. The increase of currency would but retard the true remedy. The *vis medicatrix* is the contraction of engagements—the actual suffering that follows improvidence and excess—by preventing the operation of that remedy, more paper would only aggravate your evils; that is to say, if you intend to maintain a convertible currency. From what has this dearth of capital arisen? Why is it that commerce is restricted, and solvent men have not the means of meeting their engagements? The causes have been assigned with so much distinctness and ability, and the causes so assigned appear to me so reasonable and so just, that I am scarcely justified in dwelling at any length upon them. There is nothing novel in our present position. At all times in this country a low rate of interest, and a period of apparent prosperity, have led exactly to the same depression. When you attribute commercial distress to free trade, and to the act of 1844, how do you account for this—that if you review the history of the last sixty years, at periods when protection was at its highest—in times of peace, in times of war—before the standard was disturbed—in the time of inconvertible paper currency, as afterwards when convertibility was established—that prosperity and a low rate of interest have led to exactly the same pressure and the same want of money you are at present experiencing? Take the year 1784. The standard had not been altered, either in respect to the gold or silver coin; yet in 1784, in order to protect the convertibility of its notes, the Bank of England was compelled to refuse advances on the government loan, and to reduce its notes in circulation from £9,000,000 to £6,000,000. Previous to 1784 there had been years of prosperity, years of great speculation; but as the consequence of that undue excitement, you had the pressure that followed it, and a course of violent action on the part of the bank, in order to protect its treasure from exhaustion. Take the year 1793; here again the standard had not been disturbed; the paper currency was then convertible. In 1792, before the war broke out, you had had a period of great prosperity; the distress began to be felt at the latter end of that year. Allow me to read an account of that distress, and you will see how exactly it corresponds with the distress of 1846. Mr. Tooke says—"From the operation of causes which I shall not pretend to explain, the unprecedented number of bankruptcies in November, 1792, was prodigiously exceeded in number and amount by those which took place in the spring and summer of this year—105 in March, 188 in April, 209 in May, 158 in June, and 108 in July. Many houses of the most extensive dealings and most established credit failed; and their fall involved vast numbers of their correspondents and connections in all parts of the country. Houses of great respectability and undoubted solidity, possessing ample funds, which actually did, in a short time, enable them to pay every shilling of their debts, were obliged to stop payment, and some bankers, who, almost immediately recovering from the first panic, resumed the regularity of their payments, were obliged to make a pause. \* \* \* \* It was impossible to raise any money upon the security of machinery or shares of canals; for the value of such property seemed to be annihilated in the gloomy apprehensions of the sinking state of the country, its commerce, and manufactures; and those who had any money, not knowing where they could place it with safety, kept it unemployed and locked it up in their coffers."

Is not this an exact description of the present time? Does it not exactly correspond with the state of things in 1846? In what respect is it different? Again, take the year 1810; you then had almost the command of the commerce of the world, and you had all the advantage, if it be one, of an inconvertible paper currency; but the same causes, speculation and the abuse of credit, led to exactly the same evils that occurred in 1792. In 1819 the standard was restored, and promissory paper was made convertible into gold at the will of the holder. You are invited to repeal the act of 1844. By that repeal you will restore to the bank a discretion unlimited and uncontrolled; you will restore to the joint-stock banks their privilege of making unrestricted issues; and you will, I presume, permit the revival of private banks, and give to them the right of unrestricted issues also. Before you do this, you will, I trust, read the accounts of the transactions of the northern and central bank—of the Norwich, of the Manchester, and of other joint-stock banks, which



issued notes professing to be convertible into gold at the will of the owner. You will find that non-restriction on issues, though accompanied by convertible paper, did not prevent a series of abuses which, when stated to the committee, induced it to determine that the public security required a change. The simple repeal of the act of 1844 will be the restoration of full discretion to the Bank of England, without any legislative control. In 1826, the Bank of England, had that unlimited discretion. I will give you an account of the state of affairs in 1826, when no such restrictions as those imposed by the act of 1844 existed, to fetter the power of the bank; I will take the testimony of a most unexceptionable authority, whose name will command universal respect, Mr. Alexander Baring, now Lord Ashburton. He thus describes the undue excitement and delusive prosperity of 1826, in terms which would, with almost equal fidelity, describe the state of affairs in 1847. He says—"He had no hesitation in attributing the distress of the country to the extent to which the paper circulation had been pushed about eighteen months ago, and for which the country banks, and, he was sorry to say, the Bank of England, were answerable. The Bank of England, by the facilities which they afforded, had been the authors of that dangerous redundancy of money that gave rise to the wild speculations which abounded in every part of the country. It seemed as if Bedlam had broken loose on the Royal Exchange. The same frantic spirit overran the country. The bankers in London, and their agents in the country, and the customers of both, were actuated by the same universal desire to put out their money in whatever way they could. Then, all on a sudden, the very reverse of this system came into practice. A panic seized the public. Men would not part with their money on any terms. Men of undoubted wealth and real capital were seen walking about the streets of London not knowing whether they should be able to meet their engagements next day. The over-issue by the country banks was the main cause by which the distress had been widely spread. If this crisis were allowed to pass without speaking the truth, it would be only laying the foundation for future evils. Houses which were weak went immediately; then went second-rate houses; and, lastly, houses which were solvent. All confidence was lost, and scarcely one man could be found to trust his neighbour. Men were known to seek for assistance, and that too without effect, who were known to be worth £200,000."

Such was the state of things in 1826. In 1836, the same causes had a similar result. I heard the president of the chamber of commerce at Manchester attribute to the conduct of the bank the loss of £40,000,000, sustained by the mercantile and manufacturing interests, on the great materials alone of manufacture in this country—cotton, wool, and silk. In 1839, your difficulties returned, and you were obliged to apply for the intervention of the Bank of France, for the gold in the coffers of the Bank of England was reduced to £2,000,000; and the danger was again attributed to the departure by the bank directors from the rules which they had themselves established. Thus you find that in successive periods—namely, in 1784, in 1793, in 1810, in 1826, in 1836, and in 1839, there were certain causes in operation. Distress was preceded by prosperity, which led to a monetary crisis; by a low rate of interest; by the facilities for credit. You had a state of very active speculation leading to the contraction of immense engagements; and when they came to be tried by the test of a metallic standard of value, you find a sudden collapse, and a season of stagnation and distress. The same cause, in my opinion, is operating now. There has been, in consequence of the state of prosperity, and the low rate of interest which prevailed, undue speculation. There has been, besides this, recently adopted, a mode of conducting business—devices for issuing paper—a system of re-discount of bills—which I believe to be novel in our commercial history. In this great commercial country you have erected a vast superstructure of paper currency and of paper credit on a smaller basis than any other European nation. This country and the United States attempt with a small comparative amount of the precious metals to maintain without discredit an enormous extent of promissory notes and of paper credit generally. Such a system gives, no doubt, great facilities for enterprise, but it has at the same time some counterbalancing evils. With the facilities for enterprise, the largeness of your credit, and the prodigious extent of your colonial empire, temptations are held out, and opportunities offer, for extravagant speculation, when there is a low rate of interest prevailing; and if the tendency to such speculation be not checked

but encouraged by that great establishment which is the centre of your commercial credit, the Bank of England, the consequences are inevitable. Establish what system you please, the stagnation of trade and monetary difficulties will follow the state of excitement. You will not incur the expense of greatly extending the basis on which your paper circulation rests. You are now calling for relaxation, you want more paper, and if you succeed in your demand you may rest assured that the more frequent will be the recurrence of a crisis like the present. The United States attempted the same thing. Notwithstanding the enormous resources of that great country—its growing commerce, its peculiar advantages from a boundless and fertile territory—because it trusted too far to paper currency and paper credit, such evils as you experience have fallen repeatedly upon it. This is the true state of your affairs; and the great object which you have to keep in view, is to reconcile a vast extent of paper circulation, and all its undoubted advantages, with that principle which is essential to its permanent credit, the guarantee of certain convertibility. It was not until after your experience of those evils which flow from the abuse of paper credit, that you were led to accede to any proposal that had for its object the prevention of their recurrence. When the remembrance of those evils was fresh on your minds, you willingly agreed to measures which tended to fetter the issue of paper, and to impose restrictions on the Bank of England, and every other bank. It is, no doubt, painful to refer to the affairs of individual houses; but I have no hesitation in saying, that if the commerce of the country be conducted on such principles as recent disclosures would denote, then you may in vain look to any legislative regulation, as a substitute for common sense and discretion, to prevent the recurrence of such calamities as we have recently witnessed. When I see the insolvency of a house, whose name I shall not mention, though it has been published in the newspapers, of which the liabilities amount to £50,000, and the assets to £3,000, I cannot but say that if that be the practice of your commerce, then do not complain of the act of 1844, or of any other measure, as the cause of your embarrassments. I ask, is it not monstrous that the standard of value in this country should be tampered with in order to facilitate and to uphold such transactions as these? What security can legislation give to a bank that with £600,000 of paid up capital, lends £500,000 of it to a single commercial house? What answer is it that the shareholders reposed unbounded confidence in their directors? Why did they not take an active part in the conduct of their own affairs? The bank fails, and then, like the gentleman whose liabilities were £50,000, with assets only to the amount of £3,000, they cry out, "This infernal act of 1844 is the cause of all our difficulties! We want money, and the act of 1844 prevents us from obtaining it." I say, on the contrary, you may thank the act of 1844 that your difficulties are not aggravated tenfold. Just consider what would be the state of affairs if such banks as the northern and central bank, and the Manchester bank, and the Norfolk bank, had been left at liberty to foster all this speculation by an unlimited issue of paper. Still, I do not despair that the native energy of this country will be sufficient to meet the difficulty. You will, no doubt, have the same prophecies of ruin you have always had on the like occasions—you will be told that the sun of England has set—because solvent persons cannot get credit, and money cannot be had for less than 10 per cent. You will be told that the commerce of this country cannot be conducted, if persons in trade have to pay 10 per cent. interest for money. The commerce of this country must pay for money what money is worth; and if it be very inconvenient to pay such high interest, I ask what law can prevent it? Will you make the usury laws more stringent? It is very doubtful whether the restrictions imposed already in this respect have not acted more injuriously than otherwise on the parties for whose benefit the usury laws were intended. In 1825 and 1826, many houses of respectability were said to have sunk in consequence of the restrictions imposed by the usury laws then in existence, they having been prevented by those laws from obtaining money by paying for it what it was really worth. Those who obeyed the law would not lend the money at the legal rate of interest; and those who evaded the law required, in order to cover the risk, a greater amount of interest than they could have commanded if no restrictions had existed. It is no doubt unusual that persons engaged in commercial enterprise should have to pay 8 or 10 per cent. interest; but no issue of bank notes will prevent this when there

is a dearth of capital. While capital is scarce, pass what laws you please, you must pay for the use of capital according to its improved value. But, as happened at antecedent periods, the native energies of the country would have enabled us to bear all this without that severity of suffering which we now endure, if, in the midst of distress caused by undue speculation, there had not supervened an unforeseen cause, which has aggravated ten times the difficulty which would otherwise have been felt. Three and thirty millions of money has been sent out of the country within a few months, or little more than a year, for the purpose of providing subsistence for the people. Under any circumstances, even in times of great prosperity, such a drain must have been injuriously felt. But when the exhaustion of capital for the purpose of purchasing food comes upon us, concurrently with the exhaustion of capital, in consequence of improvident commercial engagements, it does require all the energies of this country to bear up against the double simultaneous blow. But concurrently with these two, which I conceive to be the main causes of the distress, there has been another, namely, the application of an unusual amount of capital to a new species of enterprise, namely, the construction of railways. Now, Sir, I do not estimate the injurious effect of that application of capital so highly as some hon. gentlemen have done. I think that, under ordinary circumstances, such an application of capital might be advantageous. You are, by the extension of railways, laying the foundation of great future prosperity; and, in estimating the present embarrassments caused by the sudden application of so much capital to this enterprise, you must at all events deduct that amount of pressure which would have followed from the application of a large amount of that capital in the formation of foreign railways, and the promotion of other foreign enterprises. I believe that if you had not had the demand for food from abroad, and the sudden contraction of credit in consequence of improvident commercial enterprises, you would have been able to bear the demand for the capital that has been applied to railways. The capital thus applied is not a dead loss. The time will shortly arrive when these railways will be completed without loss, I trust, to those who have thus employed their capital. When I think of the saving of time and expense in the transit of goods and passengers which will be effected, I cannot doubt that railways will ultimately prove the source of improvement and prosperity to the country. But at present, I admit, the cost of their construction so operates as to increase the pressure arising from other sources. A banker is but the intervening agent between those who possess capital and those who want to borrow it. The banker receives deposits from every class, and heretofore has been accustomed to devote the bulk of those deposits to the promotion of commercial enterprise. Suddenly there comes a large demand for money to promote a new species of enterprise. This leads to a new application of capital, a diminution of deposits, a contraction of the amount of money heretofore available for ordinary commercial purposes, and of course increases the difficulties under which we labour. But of the three causes which have operated concurrently, the last—the application of capital to railways—has been, in my opinion, instrumental in a minor degree, in causing your difficulties, and the stagnation which you now experience.

I must say a word with respect to the letter to the bank of the noble lord and the right hon. gentleman. Not being in the habit of reposing my confidence in them, nor being in the sense of party one of their ordinary supporters, I feel bound to state my concurrence when I agree with them. I do then cordially approve of the course which her Majesty's government took on the occasion which led to the issue of that letter. I think they were perfectly right in not issuing the letter sooner than they did. The true remedy for the state of things under which the country is suffering, is individual exertion, the limitation of engagements, the cessation of all demands which can be postponed; and if the government had at an earlier period signified their intention of relaxing the law, they might, in my opinion, have materially discouraged those individual exertions which must be, after all, our main hope. But when there occurs a state of panic—a state which cannot be foreseen or provided against by law—which cannot be reasoned with, the government must assume a power to prevent the consequences which may occur. There is the necessity for a discretion which I think was properly exercised in the present instance. It was better to authorise a violation of the law, than to run the risk of the consequences which might have ensued if no intervention on the part of the government had taken place.

I consider that the issue of that letter was not an impeachment of the law. I entirely differ from those who contend that its issue is a conclusive proof that there ought to be a discretionary power invested by law in some authority to meet cases of panic. The case of panic cannot, in my opinion, be provided for by law. It is one of those cases the precise character and circumstances of which cannot be foreseen; and, as Mr. Huskisson says, not legislation, but the discretion of the government must meet it. Sir, I think that the government were justified in issuing that letter. I think that, having issued it, they acted with the strictest regard to constitutional principle in forthwith summoning parliament. If there had been a violation of the law, the first appeal to parliament must have been for indemnity; but it turns out that there has been no violation of the law; and I know not how parliament can give indemnity for not violating the law. I think government were perfectly right in suggesting to the bank the rate of interest at which, after the date of the letter, accommodations should be granted, and that it would have been unwise to trust the bank with an unlimited discretionary power. There would have been a pressure on the bank, and its natural sympathies would have been with those whom they saw suffering; and the better course was for the government which undertook to sanction a violation of the law, if necessary, themselves to prescribe the condition on which the law should be violated, rather than to throw on the bank the responsibility of fixing the rate of interest. The demand of a high rate of interest, whether with or without the sanction of the government, was a necessary consequence of permitting the bank to violate the law.

Sir, I will not now discuss the question—of course it will be considered maturely in the committee—whether there should be any modification of the act of 1844. I should be acting a part unworthy of a member of parliament if I permitted any dread of a charge of inconsistency to prevent me from giving a full consideration to the whole of the subject. My own impressions, I admit, are in favour of the maintenance of the great principles of that measure. I think that you ought to continue the restrictions on private and joint-stock banks. I think you ought to require of these banks to bear some share of the expense of keeping in reserve a stock of gold. I think also that if you do not impose the identical restrictions now imposed on the bank of England, some restrictions you must impose; for, after the experience of 1826, 1836, and 1839, I, for one, am not content to leave the regulation of the monetary concerns of this country to the uncontrolled discretion of the bank. In 1844, the general conviction was that it ought not to be so left; and I, for one, know no better mode of imposing restriction than that which was devised by the act of 1844.

Sir, I heard, with great satisfaction, the speech of my right hon. friend (Mr. Herries), in which he declared his inviolable adherence to the principle of a metallic currency. I have no great apprehensions on that head. If I thought that some of the opinions which I have heard delivered in the course of this debate were likely to prevail, I should indeed feel the greatest anxiety with regard to the security of property, and to the stability of commercial enterprise. I think I heard from the hon. member for Wakefield, last night, a recommendation that the government should pay off its debt of £14,000,000 to the bank, and should pay it in inconvertible paper. Sir, if the government is to set the example of paying its just debts in inconvertible paper—in paper for which there is to be no other equivalent than some other paper—if that is to be the example set by the government, I foresee that individuals in a similar difficulty will be glad to profit by that example. But I cannot believe that this House will sanction such an injustice as that the government shall pay the bank the amount of a public debt in inconvertible paper. The member for Stafford proposed that we should have convertible paper, but with a fluctuating standard. What is the meaning of that? The meaning practically is the system of assignats. To pay off notes in gold, at the market price of gold, is nothing more nor less than this, to depreciate the value of the gold by the issue of the paper and to pay your debt in the depreciated value caused by your own issue. If you are to issue paper without limit, and to redeem the paper in gold, at a price of gold to be determined by reference to paper, there can be no assignable limit to the depreciation. If you issue a fixed amount of paper currency, no doubt there may be some limit to its depreciation, but an unlimited paper currency, to be paid in a fluctuating

standard, means neither more nor less than the restoration of the system under which the paper currency of France, bearing a certain nominal value, was depreciated some 400 or 500 per cent. Sir, my security against all these projects is in the necessity for filling up the blank which follows the words "I promise to pay." I care not how you fill up that blank, provided that you really intend to maintain a convertible paper currency, because I know, however you fill it up, precisely the same consequence will result with regard to every person in the community, except, indeed, to him who is in debt. If you promise to pay two pennyweights of gold instead of four pennyweights, your promissory paper will just have credit for what it is really worth, and no more. There will not be the slightest difference as to facilities for getting money—there will not be the slightest additional security against stagnation in trade; not only the foreigner but the inhabitant of this country will estimate the value of the paper according to the real value of the coin of which it is the representative; and unless he stands in the situation of a debtor he will gain no advantage whatever. Now my firm impression is, that this House will imitate the example of its predecessors. In 1822, when this House was about to enter into an inquiry into commercial distress, it assented to a motion made by Mr. Huskisson and resolved—"That this House will not consent to make an alteration in the standard coin of the realm."

Again, in the year 1833, upon the motion of Lord Althorp, the House re-affirmed that resolution. If there should be a necessity for it, I feel convinced that the House, on an enlarged consideration of public policy, will re-affirm those resolutions. Rely upon it there is absolutely nothing in the argument that the commercial transactions of this country have so increased, that the ancient standard is incapable of being maintained. The hon. member for Westbury has justly observed that we are in error when we speak of the price of gold, and that a promissory note is nothing else but a promise to pay a certain definite weight of gold. Sir, the definition which the hon. gentleman gave is perfectly correct. The promissory note is a promise to pay a definite weight of gold, and price does not enter into consideration. You may call a £5 note by the name of a £10 note, but you will not in the slightest degree alter the real value of your currency. When you reflect what, under the present standard of value, has been the increase in the prosperity of this country—when you find, with the present standard of value, the decennial increase in the declared value of your exports, which I think in ten years, ending in 1831, was not more than £36,000,000; which increased in the next decennial period to £46,000,000; which in the three last years was not less than £59,000,000—you will find a conclusive proof that the ancient standard of value is not incompatible with the greatest enlargement of your commerce. Whatever, therefore, may be your opinion of this law of 1844, my hope is, that this House will show the same regard to justice and good faith which have been shown by their predecessors—will bear in mind that whether the policy of the act of 1819 was or was not a wise policy, the transactions that have been entered into since 1819 are as ninety-nine to one of the transactions before that period that remain unclosed—that their regard for good faith—their regard for the permanent interest of the country—their regard, above all, for the condition of those who earn by their industry the wages of labour—will induce this House of Commons to uphold the standard which, after long struggling, has been established and maintained by the wisdom of parliament.

Mr. Stuart then moved that the debate be adjourned, which was negatived by a majority of 212; the original motion for the appointment of a committee carried, and the House adjourned.

## DISABILITIES OF THE JEWS.

FEBRUARY 11, 1848.

Lord John Russell moved the second reading of this bill.

Mr. Stafford, at the conclusion of a brief speech, in which he contended that the question was not one of religious persecution, or even one of religious toleration, but whether the House should continue to hold that the possession of certain religious opinions, or of no religious opinions, ought to operate as a political disqualifica-

tion, moved as an amendment, "That the bill be read a second time that day six months."

A very long debate ensued, towards the close of which—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: Mr. Speaker, it was with great reluctance that I gave a silent vote on the first occasion on which this matter was brought under our consideration; but the peculiar circumstances under which the debate closed, so immediately before the Christmas recess, and my unwillingness to incur the risk of preventing, by an adjournment, a decision on the question, induced me on that occasion to be silent. I now wish to state the grounds on which I have come to a conclusion which is at variance certainly with first impressions, and which places me in painful collision with many with whom I have almost invariably acted—with some from whom I never, to the best of my recollection, on any former subject of equal importance, have had the pain to differ.

I must in the first place disclaim altogether any concurrence in the doctrine that to us, in our legislative capacity, religion is a matter of indifference. I am deeply impressed with the conviction that it is our paramount duty to promote the interests of religion, and its influence on the human mind. I am impressed by a conviction that the spirit and precepts of Christianity ought to influence our deliberations; nay, more, that if our legislation be at variance with the precepts and spirit of Christianity, we cannot expect the blessing of God upon them. I may, indeed, say with truth, that whether my decision on this question be right or wrong, it is influenced much less by considerations of political expediency, than by a deep sense of religious obligation.

Between the tenets of the Jew and of the Christian, there is, in my opinion, a vital difference. The religion of the Christian and the religion of the Jew are opposed in essentials. Between them there is complete antagonism. I do not consider that the concurrence of the Jew with the Christian in recognising the historical truths and divine origin of the moral precepts of the Old Testament, can avail to reconcile their difference in respect to those doctrines which constitute the vital principle and foundation of Christianity. If, as a legislature, we had authority to determine religious error, and a commission to punish religious error, it might be our painful duty to punish the Jews. But we have no such commission. If the Jews did commit an inextinguishable crime nearly two thousand years ago, we have had no authority given to us—even if we could determine who were the descendants of the persons guilty of that crime—to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, not unto the third or fourth, but unto the three hundredth or four hundredth generation. That awful power is not ours. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

I cannot, therefore, admit the right of the legislature to inflict a penalty for mere religious error. I consider a civil disability to partake of the nature of a penalty. I speak of religious error simply and abstractedly. If you can certainly infer from that religious error, dangerous political opinions, and if you have no other mode of guarding against those political opinions except by the administration of a test for the purpose of ascertaining the religious opinions, in that case you may have a right to impose the penalty of exclusion from certain trusts. In the case of the Roman Catholic you did not exclude him because he maintained the worship of the Virgin Mary, or the doctrine of transubstantiation; but because you thought he was a dangerous subject, in consequence of his acknowledging the supremacy of a foreign power and his allegiance to another sovereign. You excluded him from political power, because you believed he would abuse it. You did not inflict civil disability for mere religious error. If you can show, in this case, that the maintenance of certain religious opinions by the Jew is a decisive proof of their civil unworthiness, you may have a right to exclude them from power; but the *onus* of showing this is imposed upon you. The presumption is in their favour. The presumption is, that a Jew, as a subject of the British Crown, is entitled to all the qualifications and the privileges of a British subject. You may defeat that claim by proof of danger to the State, from admitting it; but the *onus* of proof lies upon you.

The claim of the Jews, as British-born subjects, is for entire and complete qualification for office. You do not diminish the force of that claim by their partial

qualification. You allow the Jew to fill municipal offices—you concede to him the elective franchise; but the obligation to assign a reason for withholding from him what remains is precisely the same. Nay, after you admit his qualification for the privileges and franchises which you have entrusted to him, it becomes the more incumbent upon you to assign a reason for withholding complete qualification.

A noble lord, who has spoken with so much good feeling upon this question—the member for Bath—quoted an authority entitled to much weight, a distinguished man, now no more. I wish to speak of the late Dr. Arnold with the utmost respect. The noble lord read an extract from the works of Dr. Arnold, which appeared to make a considerable impression upon the House—a passage in which Dr. Arnold says:—“For the Jews, I see no plea of justice whatever; they are voluntary strangers here, and have no claim to become citizens but by conforming to our moral law, which is the gospel.”

We are to reject the claim of the Jews now living—born in this country, and owing entire allegiance to the British Crown—to the privileges of British subjects, because their ancestors were voluntary strangers here. The descendants of an ancient Briton, of the pure blood, may be entitled to urge this objection to a Jew; but the descendant of a Norman, or a Roman, or a Saxon, or a Dane, can hardly insist upon it. His ancestors, I apprehend, were not invited here; they were “voluntary strangers;” with this difference between them and the Jews, that the Jews were content to submit to the laws and institutions which they found established, and that the others subverted them. Dr. Arnold proceeds:—“I would give the Jews the honorary citizenship which was so often given by the Romans, namely, the private rights of citizens, *jus commercii* et *jus connubii*, but not the public rights, *jus suffragii* et *jus honorum*.”

I contend that the British law recognises no such distinction; that, after conferring upon the Jew the *jus commercii* and the *jus connubii*, the *onus* of assigning satisfactory reasons for withholding from the Jew the remaining rights of citizenship continues undiminished. Unless you can show that there is something politically hostile in the character and conduct of the Jew in relation to the State—that in times of civil discord and discontent there is reason to apprehend his disaffection—or that, for some good cause or other, he is unworthy of confidence, you cannot defeat his equitable claim to the entire and complete rights of citizenship.

To the opinion of Dr. Arnold I oppose the opinion of a still higher authority, that of Lord Bacon. In his argument upon the rights of the *post nati* of Scotland, Lord Bacon has the following remarkable observations:—“It seemeth admirable unto me to consider with what a measured hand, and with how true proportions, our law doth impart and confer the several degrees of the benefits of naturalisation. The first degree is an alien enemy. The second is an alien friend. The third is a denizen. To this person the law giveth an ability and capacity abridged, not in matter but in time. The fourth and last degree is a natural-born subject—‘he is complete and entire.’ Other laws do admit more curious distinctions of this privilege, for the Romans had besides *jus civilitatis*, which answereth to naturalisation, *jus suffragii*. For though a man were naturalised to take lands and inheritance, yet he was not enabled to have a voice in passing of laws, or at election of officers. And yet, farther, they had *jus petitionis*, or *jus honorum*. For though a man had voice, yet he was not capable of honour or office. But these be devices commonly of popular or free estates which are jealous whom they take into their number, and are unfit for monarchies; but by the law of England the subject that is natural-born hath a capacity or ability to all benefits whatever.”

The Jew is a subject natural-born; and I contend that he has a right, as such, to be qualified for all civil trusts—that he has a “capacity or ability to all benefits whatever,” unless you show a reason to the contrary—a reason not founded upon mere religious error, but upon some good cause for political disqualification.

In the course of this debate the exclusion of the Jews has been justified by reference to other disqualifications to which all subjects of the queen are liable. It is contended that it is no hardship to exclude the Jews, because copyholders are excluded from rights which freeholders possess, and minors from the exercise of powers which a man of full age enjoys. An hon. and learned gentleman, who bears a name

which must be honoured in this House, the lustre of which he is, I trust, destined to renew (Mr. Walpole), contended that there is a distinction between the elective franchise and the functions of legislation, and cited, as a proof of such distinction, the case of the clergy, who are qualified to vote for members of parliament, but not to sit in parliament. Surely these are ingenious fallacies, employed for the purpose of concealing from ourselves the real character of a harsh exclusion. How does the elective franchise differ in principle from the right of legislation? There is no such franchise given by the common law; the elective franchise is a creature of the legislature. You withhold from the £9 householder a right which you give to the £10 householder. With respect to the exclusion of the clergy from this branch of the legislature, and with respect to the exclusion of minors and those who have not sufficient property, these exclusions differ altogether in their principle from the disqualification you impose upon the Jews. In the first place, the Jew is equally subject with those who profess Christianity to all these exclusions of minors, of copyholders, and £9 householders. To all these disqualifications he is equally subject with ourselves; but you superadd another disqualification to which he is specially liable. Of the exclusions to which you refer, some are voluntary, others temporary in their duration. A clergyman, when he enters upon the sacred office, knows that he will be excluded from this House. A minor, if he live until he attains his majority, will acquire his full rights. But the disqualification of the Jew is of a different character—it is a disqualification on account of his opinions—it is not temporary or voluntary—it is a superadded disqualification, and it differs in its character from the disqualifications to which other classes are subject.

Now, has there been assigned any valid cause for this disqualification, derived from the political conduct and character of the Jew? On the contrary, admissions in his favour have been made, which render the hardship of excluding the Jews still more grievous. We are told by the opponents of the Jews, that in point of moral conduct, in point of active exercise of charity, in point of tried loyalty, and in point of property, the Jews are entitled to as much consideration as any other class of the Queen's subjects. If in all these respects they are equally worthy, why subject them to exclusions which imply the want of civil worth? If the claim of the Jew to the full privileges of a natural-born subject of the Queen can only be defeated by proof of his misconduct, or of justifiable suspicion, there is an end of the question. His claim is not even contested on that ground.

But there are two reasons—for I will class all the other arguments urged against the admission of the Jews under two heads, for the purpose of brevity—which have been advanced in support of their exclusion, the force of which, if well-founded in fact, I should be the last person to deny. One of these reasons is, that you have for the last three hundred years deemed a recognition of the Christian faith a necessary qualification of a legislator; the other, that if you now abandon that qualification, and permit it to be struck out of the statute-book, where it has so long remained, this conduct on your part will imply an indifference to religion, and that such indifference is likely to relax the energies and paralyse the exertions of many devout Christians who, in this and in other countries, are using their utmost endeavours to propagate the Christian faith. Now, I wish to weigh fairly the force of these two objections. I do not undervalue the objection that you are about to remove from the statute-book the words "on the true faith of a Christian." I fear that you will give offence to many sincere Christians by removing those words; but, on a deep consideration of this subject, I am convinced that the popular impression with respect to these words, and the circumstances under which they were inserted, is erroneous, and that it would not be just to subject the Jew to continued disqualification on account of erroneous, though most sincere and conscientious impressions in respect to the intent and effect of the words which it is proposed to omit.

It was said, and truly said, by the hon. and learned member for Southampton, that up to the reign of Queen Elizabeth there was no oath required from members of parliament. The principle of the British constitution before the 1st of Elizabeth was, that the will of the electing body should determine the right to sit in parliament; and no oath was required from members of parliament before the fifth year of the reign of Elizabeth, when the oath of supremacy was administered—an oath which, if not administered on this book [here the right hon. baronet placed his hand



upon a New Testament], the Jew would have been perfectly willing to take. The oath, it is true, was administered in a form in which it could only be taken by a sincere Christian. But in the first year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the law presumed every one to be not merely a Christian, but a member of the Established Church; for it required every subject of the Queen to attend divine service in the Church once at least on every Sunday, on the penalty of twelve pence. The object of the oath of supremacy was to assure the Queen of the full allegiance of her subjects, and to exclude from office and from parliament all those who acknowledged the temporal or ecclesiastical authority of a foreign potentate within these realms. The substance of the oath was directed, not against Jews, but against Christians. It was the form of the oath alone which affected the Jew.

From the 5th of Elizabeth to the 7th of James I., no other oath than the oath of supremacy was required from members of parliament. In the 7th of James I., the year 1605, a new and additional oath was administered; that oath which contains the words "on the true faith of a Christian." The reason for this new oath is fully stated in the preamble to the act which imposed it. There is an express reference "to the barbarous and horrible attempt to have blown up with gunpowder, the King, Queen, Prince, Lords and Commons in this House of Parliament assembled." This oath continued in force until the revolution of 1688. Now, if the words "on the true faith of a Christian" had been considered important as guaranteeing the Christian character of the legislature, is it not remarkable that in the first year of the reign of William and Mary, they should have been altogether dispensed with? The oath which contained them, and with the oath the words themselves, were by express enactment "repealed, utterly abrogated, and made void;" and for that oath this simple form was substituted:—"I do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her Majesty. So help me God." From the year 1688 to the year 1701, this simple oath of allegiance was the only one required. There was no profession of the "true faith of a Christian" by members of either House of Parliament. In 1701, the pretender assumed the title of James III. That title was acknowledged by Louis XIV., and it was thought necessary, for the protection of the new dynasty, to impose an oath of abjuration. The form of the oath imposed by James I., which included the words "on the true faith of a Christian," was adopted, and has since remained in force. But it was neither originally imposed, nor subsequently revived, for the purpose of assuring the Christian character of the legislature. You now plead against the admission of the Jew the policy of maintaining that Christian character. You argue, "We have ceased, it is true, to be a Church of England parliament, we have ceased to be a Protestant parliament, but we have tests in force which ensure our unity as a Christian parliament." May not the Jew reply, that those tests were never designed for that purpose; that they were not directed against him; that they were directed, for purely political purposes, by one body of Christians against another, whose loyalty and fidelity were denied. These tests that are now to be retained as the guarantees for Christian unity, are the historical evidences of former divisions and fierce conflicts between Christians themselves.

The member for Midhurst quotes the writ of summons for the convocation of parliament, and contends that the Jew is inadmissible to the legislature, because, parliament is convened to deliberate not only on matters of State, but especially "*de quibusdam rebus Ecclesiam Anglicanam concernentibus*." What is the answer of the Jew to this objection?—"Am I less qualified than the Quaker to legislate on questions of public policy, or on matters concerning the church? I have no scruples as to the lawfulness of war. I do not deny the right to tithes; I do not refuse their payment, except on compulsion. I have no rival religious establishment, as the Roman Catholic has. You make no objection to the Unitarian, who rejects one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, and yet you plead the Christian character of the legislature as the impediment to my admission."

Still, it is contended that we have at least this satisfaction, that no member can be admitted to sit in the House of Commons without professing his belief in Christianity; that the declaration "on the true faith of a Christian," is an indispensable condition of his admission. But this is not true. I hold in my hand the declaration made by a Quaker at the table of this House, and from that declaration the words

"on the true faith of a Christian" are omitted. You will constitute no new precedent, therefore, by omitting these words in the case of the Jew. Require from the Jew the same identical declaration which you require from the Quaker, and permit the Jew to swear in the very same form in which you permit him, nay, compel him to swear in a court of law, and he will be perfectly satisfied. Can there be a stronger proof that you did not consider the words "on the true faith of a Christian" an essential qualification for the legislature, than that in framing a declaration to be made by the Quaker, on his admission to this House, you deliberately omitted them. You have done the same in the case of the Moravian and the Separatist. There is, therefore, an end of the argument, that the omission of the same words in favour of the Jew would be an act without an example, derogatory to the Christian character of parliament.

The hon. member for Dorsetshire has referred to a speech on this subject delivered by me in the year 1830, with an expression of surprise that I can now consent to the removal of Jewish disabilities. Since the year 1830, circumstances have occurred having an important bearing on this question, and making in the position of it a material change. You have in the interval admitted to the legislature classes of religionists, who in the year 1830 were excluded in common with the Jew; you have admitted the Quakers, the Moravians, and the Separatists. In respect to office—to civil, political, and municipal office, the present position of the Jew is entirely different from his position in 1830; and even now, and after the progress made in this debate, I doubt whether that position is clearly understood.

It is well known that the Jews have been selected by the Crown for civil distinctions; that under the late government, the baronetcy was conferred by the Queen upon Sir Moses Montefiore; under the present, upon Mr. Rothschild. It is also well known that the Jews are, by a recent act of parliament (passed in 1845), qualified for all municipal offices. But it is not generally known that all civil and military appointments, with very few exceptions, are tenable by a Jew.

I believe that at this moment the Jew is eligible to any executive office to which the Crown may appoint him, no matter how important may be the duties attached to that office, unless in the case of offices which must be held by privy councillors, he be precluded by the oath which is administered to a privy councillor. I apprehend that there is nothing which can prevent a Jew from being secretary of state to-morrow, except through the indirect operation of the oath required of a privy councillor, and that there is nothing in the substance or terms of that oath to which a Jew would object. If you will permit the Jew to take the privy councillor's oath on the Old Testament, the oath of the privy councillor will not exclude him from the privy council. It is my conviction, therefore, that except through the indirect operation of that oath, there is not an office within the gift of the Crown from which a Jew, practically, is excluded. Let me shortly revert to the act of 1828. A certain declaration, containing the words "on the true faith of a Christian," was by that act substituted for the declaration against transubstantiation; and, observe, these words, "on the true faith of a Christian," were not inserted in the declaration required by the bill, as it was sent up to the Lords by the House of Commons. The bill, when it left the lower House, did not contain these words; the Commons were content to admit dissenters from the church to all executive and municipal offices without requiring that declaration of Christian faith. The words were inserted in the House of Lords, and, rather than lose the bill the amendment was acceded to by the Commons. A marked distinction was made in the act of 1828, as to the period when the declaration was required; in the case of executive office, a certain time (six months after admission to office) was given; in the case of municipal office, the declaration was required to be made previously to or upon admission to office. In the year 1831, a material change took place in the enactments of the annual indemnity act. The declaration required by the act of 1828, was then placed on the same footing as all other tests. The consequence is, that during the whole of the last two reigns—the reign of King William and the reign of Queen Victoria—all parties appointed to executive office have been given, under the annual indemnity act, the whole year to qualify. Before the year expires another indemnity act passes; and the fact therefore is, that at this moment, except through the indirect operation of the privy councillor's oath, there is not an office under the Crown which a Jew may not hold, and be protected in holding.

Having acceded to those important changes in the position of the Jew, and having admitted all other dissenters to legislative functions, can we permanently maintain the exclusion of the Jew from parliament? He is possessed of the elective franchise. He is eligible to, and has entered upon, municipal office. He may be Lord Mayor of London. He is shut out from no office under the Crown excepting that of privy councillor. The Crown has been enabled for the last seventeen years to appoint the Jew to high political office; but there is a certain trust which can only be exercised through the good will of electors, the great majority of whom must probably be professing Christians, and yet from that trust the Jew is to remain excluded. There is no jealousy of the Crown in respect to the appointment of Jews to the most important civil offices, but such jealousy of the Christian electors of this country, that you will not permit them to send the man of their choice to this House, if he happen to be a Jew.

Sir, my opinion is, that you cannot permanently maintain that exclusion, and if you cannot, why not remove it now? You have removed other disabilities with little danger to the interests of the church, or to the interests of the Christian religion. My firm belief is—and I rejoice in the conviction—that the Church of England is stronger at this moment than at any period of her history. The disposition of the church to admit timely and salutary reforms has been one great cause of that strength. A still more efficient cause is the deep religious feeling which has been awakened through the country. The strength of the church and of religion is not now dependent on the question of two or three votes, more or less, in this House. The church is strong enough to be independent on all essential points of the decisions of this House. It is rooted in the affections of the people, and it is a disparagement to religion and to the church to contend that the safety of either depends upon the continued exclusion from this assembly of the Baron de Rothschild, or three or four gentlemen of the Jewish faith. Were it not for internal dissensions within the church itself, the church would be stronger at this moment, after the successive relaxation of disabling laws, than it was, even at the period when you required conformity to the faith of the church as an essential qualification for parliament.

I cannot then assign danger to the church as a reason for excluding the Jew. At the same time I deeply regret that the feelings of zealous and pious Christians should be wounded by the omission from an oath of the words "on the true faith of a Christian." Believing, however, the impression with regard both to the original intent and the effect of those words to be erroneous; seeing that it is an error to suppose they have formed a part of the qualification for parliament for an uninterrupted period since their first introduction, in the reign of James I., inasmuch as they were "utterly abrogated, repealed, and done away," at the time of the revolution, and were only revived thirteen years afterwards for a purely political purpose—seeing that it is an error to suppose that they are now required for every member of the legislature, inasmuch as they are waived in the case of the Quaker, the Moravian, and the Separatist—I cannot think it just to continue the exclusion of the Jew, from deference to conscientious but erroneous impressions.

I own, Sir, that I do cordially rejoice that I can find no constitutional impediment to the complete admission of the Jew to the right of a British subject. If there be a class of our fellow-beings to whom reparation is due from every Christian State in Europe—reparation for centuries of calumny, persecution, and wrong—the Jews are that class. I defy you to read the early history of this country, narrated, not by indignant Jews, but by the popular historians of your own faith, without shuddering at the atrocities committed by Christian sovereigns and a Christian people. Hume says, "Our ideas scarcely come up to the extortions which we find to have been practised upon the Jews." Speaking of King Henry III., and detailing his unjust demands for money, and his threats to hang the Jews if they refused compliance, he says, "The king then delivered over the Jews to the Earl of Cornwall, that those whom one brother had flayed, the other might embowel." He remarks that "the acts of violence against the Jews proceeded much from bigotry, but more from avidity and rapine."

Even in that age these things would not have been done or tolerated, but for deep-rooted prejudices and wide-spread antipathy to the Jews, on account of their religious faith. Are we quite sure that the same prejudices—the same antipathy—do not

still exist? We disclaim them within these walls; but are they not the real cause of much of the opposition to the relief of the Jew from civil disabilities? Of this I am confident, that within the present century both the people and the government of this country have been influenced by such unworthy feelings. It was the deference to irrational prejudice that induced the ministry in 1753 to propose the repeal of the act for the naturalisation of foreign Jews, passed in the preceding year. The most disgraceful day in the annals of the British parliament was that on which the Duke of Newcastle, the first minister of the Crown, proposed the repeal of that act. A general election was impending—great excitement prevailed—excitement of such a nature, that the member for Exeter, who had voted in favour of the Jews, was denounced as a Jew, and was compelled to appease his constituents by citing, in proof of his Christianity, the fact, that he had repeatedly travelled on a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

The lord chancellor (Lord Hardwicke), in his place in the House of Lords, condescended to vindicate the government for proposing the repeal of the naturalisation act by such arguments as these:—Speaking of the Jews, and the popular feelings towards them, Lord Hardwicke observed—"By our laws they may be protected from any open violence or direct assault; but whilst the people are so highly and so generally exasperated against them as they everywhere appear to be at present, they will be exposed to daily insults and vexations which no law can provide against or punish, especially in this county, where no man, not even the King himself, is vested with absolute power, and where every magistrate is obliged to confine himself within the letter of the law. Therefore, whilst the people continue in their present humour, it will be impossible for any Jew, rich or poor, to live here with the same ease and security which he did before that law was passed."

Again:—"I am convinced that the ill-humour of the people would before now have broken out, if it had not been for the hope that, as soon as parliament met, the law would be repealed; and if they were to see two or three dozens of their countrymen hanged every session for mobbing or murdering the Jews, I believe it would not contribute towards restoring them to good humour, especially as many of them would find, at least imagine, that the Jews interfered with them in their trade or business."

For such reasons as these, in avowed obedience to the most irrational and vulgar prejudices, a slight privilege conceded to the Jews in 1752 was suddenly withdrawn in 1753, by the same ministers and the same parliament by which it had been granted.

I have cited the authority of Hume for the cruelties practised in England upon the Jews during the reigns of King John and his successor. Let me read an extract from another historian, Sharon Turner, containing a brief summary of the persecutions to which this unhappy people were subject in this country and other parts of Europe:—"When we recollect their massacre along the Rhine in 1096, and in England in the time of Richard I., and read of their repeated destructions in Germany; in 1221 at Erfurt; in 1263 at Fulda, when, on an accusation of their killing Christian boys for their blood, the emperor ordered an inquiry whether Christian blood was a necessary part of their passover, to which the official answer was, that nothing certain was known on the subject. In 1240 at Frankfort, 'with fire and sword'; in 1282 at Mentz and other places; in 1298 at Nuremburgh and through all Franconia; that they were also exterminated from Bavaria; that in 1348, 1349, and 1350, they were killed 'like cattle,' and mercilessly burned in great numbers at Basle, Friburg, Spire, Wurms, Frankfort, Mentz, Alsace, Cologne, and in every part of Germany; when we recall to mind that these are only specimens of what they endured in other places, and were for several centuries in perpetual danger of everywhere suffering, we can hardly persuade ourselves that any remnant of the nation so bitterly persecuted can now be surviving."

They have survived, having borne their wrongs with exemplary patience and resignation. Suppose the result of these bitter persecutions had been to make the Jews a degraded race—suppose "the iron had entered into their souls;" suppose they had been so bowed down, as to have become—

"Curvæ in terris animæ ac cœlestium inanes"—

who would be responsible for their degradation?

If the Jews were debased or inferior in moral worth to Christians, could that debasement and inferiority—the natural result of oppression—be now assigned with

any semblance of justice, as an impediment to the grant of equal rights to the Jews? Could the Christian rulers of Europe justly reproach the Jews for continuing a separate people, and for being deficient in ardent patriotism and devoted attachment to the institutions under which such wrongs had been inflicted? Could they be astonished, if, vexed by repeated persecutions, the Jews—permitted the past, the distant, and the future, to predominate over the present?—if sitting down by the waters of strange lands, they wept, when they remembered Sion?

But, according to your own acknowledgment, the Jews have not been debased. In point of courage, of moral worth, of intellectual power, of mental acquirements, they yield precedence to none. They have been faithful subjects of the Crown: in the times of severe trial, at home or abroad, their loyalty has never wavered. On what ground, then, do you justify their exclusion from any privilege of a Protestant subject? Are they not so far entitled to our confidence, that they may be qualified for a trust, which they cannot exercise except through the good will of Christian constituencies?

It may be that considerations of the past—that the desire to make reparation for former wrongs—ought not to control or influence our judgment; but they may so far operate as to inculcate the duty of mature reflection, whether we cannot reconcile our feelings with our duty, and to increase our satisfaction, if we find that they are not incompatible.

I have other motives that weigh with me. There are countries in which the Jews are still subject to persecution and cruel oppression. Twice within the last three or four years has a British subject, distinguished for his benevolence and philanthropy, Sir Moses Montefiore, repaired to distant lands, in the hope of mitigating the hard lot of the suffering Jews. He repaired to St. Petersburg for the purpose of imploring mercy towards the Jews in Poland. He repaired to the East for the purpose of relieving, if possible, the Jews in Palestine from shameful wrongs, perpetrated on the pretext that they murdered Christian children in order that their blood might be available for the passover.

He carried with him letters of recommendation from British ministers, certifying his high character for integrity and honour, and the purity of the motives by which he was actuated. How much more persuasive would those letters have been if they could have announced the fact, that every ancient prejudice against the Jews had been extinguished here, and that the Jew was on a perfect equality, as to civil rights, with his Christian fellow-citizen. Place him on that footing of perfect equality, and the influence of your benevolent legislation will extend far beyond the narrow limits of your own country. You will exercise an authority and jurisdiction, even in foreign countries, which laws, however jealous of external interference, cannot exclude—the moral authority of a just and benevolent example. You will offer consolation to many a wounded spirit, and weaken the force of the prejudices and antipathies which harden the heart against the impulses of humanity; at any rate you will make it impossible to justify those prejudices by the example of England.

It remains for me only to refer to the argument against the removal of Jewish disabilities which was chiefly relied on by my right hon. friend (Mr. Goulburn), and urged by him with great force and effect.

My right hon. friend says, that there are many zealous Christians, who, from the deepest conviction and the purest motives, devote their lives to the propagation of divine truth, and the reclamation of the ignorant and the guilty from sin and error. He says justly, that we possess an extended empire, bringing us into contact with gross ignorance and superstition—which pious missionaries are labouring to extirpate. He fears that their zeal will be relaxed, and their exertions paralysed, if the legislature should manifest that indifference towards divine truth, which might be implied by the admission of the Jew to the legislature, and by thus relinquishing the distinguishing character of a Christian parliament. I concur with my right hon. friend, that vast dominion imposes upon us the gravest responsibility. That dominion may be destined by Providence to advance much higher purposes than the aggrandisement of empire, or the extension of commerce. Empire and commerce may be the means towards a great end; they may be the avenues through which the light of knowledge is to penetrate the cloud of error, through which “the day-spring from on high is to visit those that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of

death." I agree with him, that if by assenting to this measure indifference towards divine truth could be justly imputed to us—if the suspicion of it should relax the zeal or defeat the exertions of devout and pious men labouring in the cause of true religion—such a result would be a lamentable one, with evil consequences far outweighing any which could arise from the continued disabilities of the Jews.

My right hon. friend contends, that even if the zeal of the pious missionary should not be damped by our misconduct—if he should still continue to enforce the truths of Christianity, yet if it came to the knowledge of those to whom these truths were addressed, that at home the distinctions between Christians and Jews had been abolished by admitting the Jews to legislative functions, the millions of heathens whom Providence has placed under our rule would be shocked by our inconsistency, and would be unwilling to assent to doctrines which we ourselves appeared to repudiate.

I cannot concur in the apprehensions of my right hon. friend. Let me take the natives of some distant country, utterly ignorant of the truths of the Gospel, but not insensible to the force of reason. If you could tell them that your policy towards the Jew was that of the reign of Richard I., or of the Spanish Inquisition—that you so abominated the crime which his ancestors had committed, and so detested his unbelief that you would hold no communion with him—that by your laws he was subject to banishment and torture, the heathen might think you deficient in charity, but give you credit for your devotion to the true faith. But if you told the heathen, as you must tell him, that your relation to the Jew was not very well defined—that you lived on friendly terms with the Jew—that you imposed on him all the burdens to which a British subject was liable—that you freely borrowed his money—that the Jew might dispense justice as a magistrate—that he might be lord mayor of the city of London—that he was qualified for almost all civil offices—that he might elect members of parliament, but that, from zeal for the Christian faith, you could not allow the Jew to be a member himself—surely this appeal, however consistent with the truth, would not make a powerful impression on his mind.

Try the force of another appeal. Tell the heathen of the wrongs which Christian states have inflicted on the Jews: tell him that we live under a constitution which knows no distinction among British subjects as to civil rights—that we profess a religion which commands us to be forbearing and forgiving towards one another—that we serve a God whose almighty power is most chiefly declared by showing mercy and pity—that we worship a Redeemer who inculcated by his life, and sanctified by his death, the precepts of Christian charity: tell him, that in humble obedience to these precepts, we have given to the Jews the same benefits and privileges we possess ourselves—try the force of that appeal, and it will not be made in vain.

It is for these reasons—because I believe it to be in conformity with the enlarged and comprehensive spirit of the British constitution that these qualifications should no longer exist—because I rejoice in the opportunity of making reparation for the injuries and persecutions of former times—because I think the Jew has fairly earned the privileges which it is proposed to extend to him, by patience and forbearance—by tried fidelity and loyalty—but, above all, because I am one of a Christian people, because I am a member of a Christian legislature, I will perform an act which I believe to be in strict conformity with the spirit and precepts of the Christian religion. We are commanded by that religion, as the condition of our own forgiveness, to forgive those who have trespassed against us. That duty is not in this case imposed upon us; but there is another duty, as sacred in point of moral obligation, and more trying to human pride, namely, that we should forgive those against whom we have trespassed. Sir, I shall give my cordial support to the bill before the House.

The amendment was negatived, and the bill read a second time.

## THE INCOME-TAX.

MARCH 6, 1848.

House in Committee of Ways and Means.

The resolution for the continuance of the income-tax for a limited period having been read—Mr. Hume proposed as an amendment, that instead of the words "for a

time to be limited," the words "not exceeding one year" should be introduced after the word "time."

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, I think it is impossible, in considering the question whether or no this income-tax shall be now continued for a limited time, to exclude altogether a consideration of the circumstances under which the tax was imposed in the year 1842, and renewed in the year 1845; and I feel it incumbent upon me, after the reflections which have been cast upon this tax and upon the motives and conduct of those who proposed it, to vindicate the government by which it was proposed, and to vindicate at the same time that House of Commons which, by immense majorities in 1842 and 1845, consented to the original imposition and the continuance of the tax. This House of Commons, or at least that part of it which did not constitute a part of the last, must have a strange opinion of the conduct of their predecessors; they must be filled with surprise to hear that it was possible for a minister to persuade the House of Commons improperly to consent to the tax. The hon. gentleman who spoke last says, that this tax was smuggled through the House of Commons. "Smuggled," indeed! "Smuggle" through the House an income-tax imposing at least £5,000,000 a year upon the people of this country! Sir, I say if you, the House of Commons, are ashamed of your vote, rescind it; if events have occurred convincing you that that policy was wrong, alter your course; you are at perfect liberty to do so; it would be absurd, as I have said before, upon these matters of economical policy to exclude the experience you have had in the intervening time; but it is a gross reflection upon that House of Commons which sanctioned this tax to insinuate, that it was "smuggled through the House;" and it is to cast an injurious imputation upon those who proposed it, that they concealed the real motive for their conduct, and had one object in view when they professed another. By overwhelming majorities in 1842 that tax was assented to. One hon. gentleman, the member for Finsbury, says that he was fascinated; one of the representatives of the people, a representative of a most popular constituency, makes the humiliating avowal that he permitted a tax, imposing the payment of £5,000,000 in time of peace upon the people of this country, not upon a grave deliberate consideration of the merits of that tax, but because he was fascinated by the manner of the minister. Another hon. member says, the tax was "smuggled through the House." But why did you permit a tax of this kind to be smuggled through the House? Sir, I will convince this House of Commons that there never was an imputation more ill-founded; that there were grave considerations of commercial and financial policy which induced your predecessors by great majorities to consent to that tax, rather than to impose indirect taxation, or even to continue it. I was appointed to office in 1841. Now, this I say, that as to anything appearing like an invidious contrast between the acts of the late government and the present, or that which preceded the late government, I utterly disclaim any such intention. One of my motives for giving a cordial support to the financial proposition of the present government is, that I am fully sensible of the great difficulties with which they have had to contend. They have had to contend with calamities of rare occurrence, which have naturally, by their effect, disturbed both the commercial and financial policy of this country; but I must state the truth in vindication of the late House of Commons, and the majority by which the tax was supported. I will attempt to state it from memory, without troubling the House with a minute reference to figures. In 1841 the government with which I was connected succeeded to power. There was a deficit in the revenue as compared to the expenditure. It was not an occasional and casual deficit. In 1838 there had been a deficit, I think, nearly to the amount of £1,800,000; in 1839 there was a deficit of not far from £500,000; in 1840 there was a deficit again of £1,500,000; in 1841 there was a deficit of £2,400,000. My estimate was, that if no great financial effort were made, and if the estimates continued at the rate in 1843 which they had stood at in 1842, there would be a deficit in the revenue of that year—the year ending April 6, 1843—of not less than £2,600,000. On that day there would have been a deficit, the accumulation of deficit of five successive years, of not less than £10,000,000. That was the financial condition of the country. And what had taken place? When the House of Commons consented to a measure which could only be objected to on financial grounds—I mean the alteration of the post-office

duty—when they consented to make that financial experiment, and to incur the risk of immediate loss of, I think, nearly £1,200,000, the House of Commons of that day professed a determination to support the public credit, and declared that they would have no deficit. The right hon. gentleman the then chancellor of the exchequer, in fulfilment of that pledge, proposed, I think, in 1840, that 5 per cent. should be added to the then existing duties of customs and excise, and 10 per cent. to the then rate of the assessed taxes. Now, what was the fact presented to me as the consequence of that measure? If I recollect right, the right hon. gentleman estimated that the 5 per cent. upon the customs and excise would produce nearly £2,000,000—above £1,900,000 I believe; the actual increase, so far from being £1,900,000, was, upon the most favourable calculation, not more than £700,000; consequently there was a deficiency, comparing the actual produce with the estimated produce, of not less than £1,300,000. But see what had taken place with regard to the assessed taxes, the taxes approaching more nearly to direct than to indirect taxation. The right hon. gentleman's estimate, I think, was not more than £275,000, as the produce of his 10 per cent upon the assessed taxes; but the actual produce was above £300,000, exceeding by that amount the estimate which he had stated to us. There was, consequently, the evidence that indirect taxation, that is to say, that species of indirect taxation which is implied in a regular per centage upon the articles of import, had completely failed; whereas an increase of that taxation which partakes of the nature of direct taxation had completely succeeded. On those grounds, so far as they involved financial considerations, I ask the House whether or no it was prudent to resort to avowedly direct taxation, or to ask for that increase of revenue which all admitted to be advisable, through the renewal of the duty on salt, or on leather, or on any of those articles on which the duty had been reduced? We proposed an income-tax, and the House approved of that measure. It was not "smuggled through;" it was assented to after long debate, and after strenuous opposition, with a deep conviction that indirect taxation in the then state of the country offered no solution of your difficulties. But there were commercial as well as financial considerations which recommended this tax to the House. What was your commercial position in the year of which I am speaking? There existed complete prohibitions upon the import of all animals that formed part of human subsistence. No cow, no sheep, no bullock, could be introduced; there was absolute prohibition. What were the duties upon other articles of subsistence? On bacon there was a duty of 28s. per cwt., on hams a duty of 28s. per cwt., on rice a duty of 7s. per quarter, on salted pork 12s., on salted beef 12s.; nay, there was even a duty of 2s. per cwt. on the import of potatoes; and when we proposed to reduce it, there was the greatest remonstrance against it, and prophecies of ruin on the part of those districts in which potatoes were grown in this country. What was the state of the Corn-law at that time? If the price of wheat was 67s. 11d. a quarter, the duty then attaching to foreign wheat imported was 18s. 8d.; if the price was 63s. 11d., the duty was 23s. 8d.; if the price was 62s. 11d., the duty was 24s. 8d. I proposed in that year, as a general rule, to remove all prohibitions, and to permit imports at certain rates of duty; to admit all raw materials, the elements of our own manufacture, at a rate of duty not exceeding 5 per cent.; to admit all goods partially manufactured at a rate not exceeding, I think, 12 per cent., and all articles completely manufactured at a rate not exceeding 20 per cent. That proposition was made on the part of the government, and that proposition was acceded to, after repeated discussions, by large majorities of that House of Commons. The tax continued till the year 1845; it would have expired on the 5th of April, 1845; but one half-year remained to be received. In the statement which I made to the House of Commons in 1845, I said that on the 5th of April, 1845, notwithstanding the remissions of taxation in 1842, there would be a surplus of revenue as compared with expenditure to the amount of £5,000,000. That was my estimate of the surplus. I stated that, even if you repealed the income-tax, or rather permitted it to expire in 1845, there would be on the 5th of April, 1846—taking credit for about £2,600,000, the half-year of the income-tax—a surplus of £2,600,000. I stated at the same time, that in the opinion of her Majesty's government, it was advisable to add greatly to the naval estimates of this country. The progress that was made in steam navigation, the utter deficiency of any means of repairing steam-boats in the Channel,



the unfitness of your ports for the accommodation of war steamers generally—made it right, in the opinion of the government, to lay the foundation of those works to which the hon. gentleman the secretary to the admiralty recently adverted. We thought it advisable also in that year to increase the number of men in the navy to the extent, I think, of 5,000. I stated that before the renewal of the income-tax. I stated fully to the House—"This is your condition; if you adhere to the estimates and make no increase in them, you will have an available surplus at the end of the current year of not less than £2,600,000; but a great part of that, of course, will be derived from the half-year's income-tax to be received. If you continue the income-tax, and consent to the increase of the estimates, you will in that case have an estimated surplus on the 5th of April, 1846, of £3,600,000. In what manner will you appropriate that surplus, if you consent to the renewal of the income-tax?"

I made various propositions again, carrying into effect the principles and policy which had been adopted in 1842. Before I asked the House to consent to the continuance of the income-tax, I entreated them seriously to consider whether or no they preferred the continuance of it, with the remission of the excise duties upon glass, the auction duty, and an alteration of the sugar duties, involving a loss of no less than £1,300,000. So far from taking the House by surprise, the whole of these considerations were most fully presented to them. The House affirmed the increase of the estimates—the House affirmed the continuance of the income-tax—the House affirmed the repeal of those taxes to which I have referred, leading to an absolute loss of revenue, which it was utterly impossible to recover except by the indirect effect of the increase of the consumption of other taxed articles—a loss of not less than £2,500,000. Upon various articles the loss was £330,000; upon glass the loss was £600,000; upon cotton the loss was £480,000; and upon auction duties the loss was £300,000. In short, the total repeal of taxation which it was utterly impossible to recover, as you can recover revenue in the case of a reduced tax upon some great article of consumption, was not less than £2,500,000. It was upon a full cognizance of all these facts that the House of Commons assented to my scheme of financial policy. It is said, that when I subsequently addressed a certain body of merchants in a distant town—the subjects of another sovereign—I gave an explanation of my views and intentions, which were at variance with my original declarations in parliament. I utterly deny it. I certainly have seen in the newspapers what professed to be a letter written by me; but, in point of fact, it was, first, a German translation of a letter which I did write; and, in the next place, an English translation from that German translation. I have no great desire to correct the errors of the press, or to repel the attacks that are made upon me in consequence of those errors; but here is the letter which I did actually write, and by which I would prefer to be bound rather than by any double translation. I presume nobody would wish me to read any other part of it than that which relates to the subject immediately under discussion. An address had been presented to me by certain merchants; and I answered the address by expressing my gratification at their approval of the three principal measures connected with the financial and commercial policy of the country, which it had been my duty, as the chief minister of the Crown, to propose to parliament. I then said—"The property-tax was intended not merely to supply a deficit in the revenue, as compared with the public expenditure, but to lay the foundation for a juster principle of taxation; to afford the means for repealing duties on the raw materials of important manufactures; for exempting great branches of domestic industry (the manufacture of glass, for example) from vexatious regulations of excise; and for remitting or reducing taxation on several articles imported from abroad, which are essential to the comfort and enjoyment of the industrious classes of the community."

Now, I beg to ask whether the imposition of the income-tax was not the foundation of the commercial policy of the country? Why, is it possible that I could propose the remission of taxes to an amount of no less than £7,500,000, if I had not, as a foundation for that commercial policy, an income-tax to fall back upon? There were 1,200 articles of consumption which were subject to duty, either of customs or of excise, and many of which duties led to restrictions of a vexatious nature, and which were felt to be more onerous than the amount of duty imposed. On 700 of those articles the duties were reduced; and on not less than 500 of them, in the course of three years, the duties were entirely repealed. Was it not to lay the founda-

dation of such a commercial policy that the House of Commons assented to the temporary imposition of an income-tax? Did any one at the time say "No" to it? True, you did not in express words say that the income-tax was to be the foundation of such a policy; but the language used by me was identically that I have just now quoted. When, in March 1842, I invited you to consent to the imposition of this tax, insinuations were thrown out that the government was not in earnest in proposing so great a change in the commercial policy of the country, and that we had not expressly stated that the existence of the government depended upon your assenting to the proposition. Now, what is the fact? On the 23d of March, 1842, before the House of Commons assented to the measure, they heard these words from me:—"I propose this as a measure which involves the fate of the government. I do propose it—I speak not of minor details, but of the measure itself—as the basis of the financial and commercial policy of the country, and as a measure which I never could have consented to propose, if I did not manifest my conviction of its necessity by risking my fate as a minister upon it."

These were actually the expressions I then used. I certainly did, on that occasion, intimate a strong doubt whether it would not be better, in order to give full scope to the new commercial policy that had been adopted, to impose the income tax for a period of five years rather than of three; though at the same time I entertained, and indeed intimated a hope—a sanguine hope—that it might be possible to dispense with the continuance of the tax after a period of three years. I can say with truth, that I had no covert design at that moment of perpetuating the tax. I then thought that a revival of trade would so increase the ordinary sources of the revenue, as to enable the government to consider whether the income-tax might not, with perfect safety, be discontinued. When the House went into committee, on the 5th of April, 1845, it was believed that there would be a surplus of £5,000,000; but, although my expectations in that respect were disappointed, yet the buoyancy of the ordinary sources of revenue had been such as to afford an amount sufficient to supply the void which had been occasioned by the repeal of taxes in previous years. It was with a full knowledge of these facts on the part of the House of Commons, that I ventured to propose to them the continuation of the income-tax. Now, if the House regret that measure, then, as I said before, they have a right to express their regret, and to take a different course. But I don't want to shelter myself under their authority. As long as I live, I shall never repent that I proposed that alteration in the commercial policy of the country, and that I induced the House of Commons—not by fascination—not by smuggling—but by a full and explicit statement of the financial affairs of the country, to continue the tax; and that I induced the House to supply the place of the large reduction of duties upon imports, by imposing a tax upon the income and property of the country. At the time the income-tax was originally proposed (and this is a point which is not altogether immaterial to the present argument), I was told that the substitution of direct taxation for indirect taxation, to the extent I proposed to substitute it, was most unwise, and that I should find, that although I might derive a large sum from the income-tax itself, yet I should at the same time have to make a large deduction from the revenue generally on account of the defalcations that would occur in the amount derived from indirect taxation, which deficiency would bear a corresponding relation to the increase arising from the income-tax. Now, that is not the case. In the year 1842, when I proposed the income-tax, the assessed taxes amounted to £4,190,000. That was before direct taxation was imposed at all. In 1847, the same assessed taxes produced £4,334,000, notwithstanding the existence of the income-tax during the whole period between 1842 and 1847: so far, therefore, from there being a decrease in the revenue derived from the assessed taxes on account of the simultaneous imposition of an income-tax, there was an increase of more than £100,000 in the receipt of the assessed taxes for last year. Neither in 1842, nor in 1845, did I mean to lay down any principle with regard to the proportion which direct taxation should bear to indirect taxation. I said this only—that I thought the proposal to impose a tax of three per cent. upon the revenue of the country, after taking off the duties upon the raw materials employed in our manufactures, and after diminishing other taxes, the high rate of which led to smuggling, would be beneficial to the public; and that the substitution of a three per cent. income-tax for the taxes

so repealed or diminished would be just. I am quite aware that there are limits to direct taxation, and I do not agree with those who would substitute direct for indirect taxation. I do not think you could, except for a special and temporary purpose, wisely carry direct taxation to a much greater extent than you have already carried it. But you must, nevertheless, admit that there is a great inducement in evil times to take a revenue from indirect rather than from direct taxation. Although I may think that the imposition of direct taxation is preferable as compared to indirect taxation, yet I am not at all prepared to assert that direct taxation should, without mature consideration, be substituted for indirect taxation. I held that opinion in 1842, and also in 1845, and I hold it now. I voted against the proposal which was made by the hon. gentleman the member for Cockermouth (Mr. Horsman) the other night—a proposal which he seemed to think, on account of the difficulties of the subject, he had not clearly explained, but which I must say was perfectly intelligible to me; at the same time, I found it quite impossible to assent to it. Now, I believe, I entertain opinions at variance with a large body of the members of this House on the subject of the income-tax. I admit there are many individual cases of great hardship under a tax of that description. Taking the circumstances of individual cases into consideration, instances of hardship cannot be denied; but I do not assent to the proposition that it is therefore an unjust tax. I think while the tax exists it ought to be a tax upon income. If, indeed, you intend to make a great national exertion, and propose to lay a tax upon capital, why then tax it. Suppose, for instance, it was proposed to pay off the national debt, it might be desirable, in that case, to make a great exertion. I am not saying that any such exertion is desirable. On the contrary, I am speaking now of an annual exertion only, which is required to be made to meet an annual demand; and I must say, after having given the subject repeated consideration, I think the tax ought to be on income, and that there should be no distinction made in the amount of the tax on account of the different sources from which the incomes are derived. I never would consent to relieve from the tax, incomes derived from trade and from professions, for the purpose of making an invidious and, as I think, an unjust distinction, by levying such a tax upon funded or what is called realised property. I think an effort ought to be made to meet the annual demand of the country by the annual exertion of the country, inasmuch as the annual income of the country depends upon that exertion. Why, that is really the principle upon which all your taxes are founded—all those taxes for which this income-tax is a substitute. Surely, all the taxes which have been repealed fall equally heavily upon the professional man as upon the man of realised property. You make no distinction as to those who pay taxes on articles of luxury, or who pay the assessed taxes, whether they be professional men or possess realised property. By repealing the taxes on articles of luxury you benefit all parties equally, and therefore it seems to me that the onus of the tax which you substitute for those you have repealed, ought to be borne equally by all, whatever may be the source of their income. If you were to attempt to make the distinction such as the hon. member for Cockermouth has suggested, it would be fallacious, and the same difficulties which are now pointed out in respect to the incomes of professional men and men of real property would occur. No principle can, in my opinion, be devised which would be more just, or, I would rather say, would be more free from objection, than that which you are desirous of seeing removed. It was upon that principle that I proposed the imposition of the income-tax in 1842, and its renewal in 1845; and subsequent consideration has confirmed me in the opinion, that any attempt to impose a greater annual burden upon income derived from realised property would, apart from the objection that the public faith is pledged to the contrary in the case of the funds, lead to consequences which I am not prepared to contemplate, and which I should dread to see accomplished. Sir, I am not prepared to recommend an increase of direct taxation, nor a departure from the principle, at least on which the present amount of direct taxation is founded. I come now to the question raised by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Hume), whether this tax shall be continued for three years or for one. I shall give my decided support to the proposition of the government for maintaining the tax for a period of three years. The hon. gentleman proposes that the tax shall be continued for one year only. With his opinions—that immense reductions can safely be made in the amount of our military and naval expen-

diture—that proposal is a consistent one. But how the hon. gentleman, the member for North Warwickshire (Mr. Spooner), can vote for the proposition for continuing the income-tax for one year, I do not so well understand. The hon. gentleman says he shall give his cordial support to the government in their resolution to maintain the whole of the force now on foot, considering that they have wisely, under existing circumstances, determined not to reduce that force. Well, then, if the present amount of force is to be maintained—and I am decidedly of opinion that it ought to be maintained—I cannot foresee any such reductions in the estimates as will enable us to dispense with the income-tax in 1849. The hon. gentleman the member for North Warwickshire says, “True, I support the estimates of the government; but there are some other items of expenditure in which I think retrenchments may be made.” I listened with great attention to the speech of the hon. gentleman; but my expectations were greatly disappointed when I found that one great retrenchment was to be made by saving the expense of the commission for charities; while the other proposition was to save the expense that might occur if the hon. member for Bolton (Dr. Bowring) were again sent to inquire into the manner of keeping accounts in foreign countries. Whatever we have paid the hon. gentleman is irrecoverable. But suppose you apply the principle; well, then, I suppose you would make a saving of £1,000. That is a very small saving; and the proposition of the hon. member for North Warwickshire only shows, that if such suggestions can be offered as saving the expense of the commission for charities, or the saving of such a salary as might be paid to the hon. member for Bolton for inquiring into foreign accounts—it only shows, I say, that if the amount of our military force is to be maintained, we cannot expect any great reduction in our expenditure, even if the hon. gentleman should be added to the committee. I do not say one word against reduction. I confess I have been alarmed at the gradual increase of our expenditure. Of the responsibility for that increase the House of Commons is not exempt from a great portion. It is owing in a considerable measure to the suggestions offered in this House. I think that the increase which has taken place at the instance of the government is very large on some items of expenditure; but then those items were of essential importance. I think it would not be difficult to convince the House of the absolute necessity that existed for making some additions in our different dockyards to the efficiency of our steam force. When, in 1842, I came to look to the state of the defences, I found it absolutely necessary to complete the fortifications of such places as Portsmouth and Plymouth, with a view of, at all events, protecting them from any sudden attack. As to the various classes of military officers, the numbers of which have been increased, that increase originated in the suggestions of the House—suggestions which more than one government have been blamed for not having given sufficient weight to. At the same time, I should have given my assent to the continuance of the tax in question with the utmost reluctance, did I think that that continuance would tend to withdraw the items of our expenditure from the most careful revision. But I am not so sanguine as some hon. gentlemen relative to the immediate effects of economy and retrenchment. Many instances of retrenchment may lead to an immediate and temporary increase of expenditure. You must not calculate on any such sudden reduction of expenditure as will enable you to dispense with a very large amount of expense incurred in the great branches of the service. Mind, I say not a word against the proposed inquiry into this subject—against the necessity for a searching investigation. In 1835, the estimates were undoubtedly lower than at any other period; but they were so low that the House was obliged to assent to their increase; while, as a general rule, it will be found that their reduction, if carried on too precipitately, although it may lead to a temporary saving, may yet necessitate at some future period a corresponding increase of expenditure. I shall give my vote, Sir, for the continuance of this tax for a longer period than that which the hon. gentleman proposes, because I am deeply convinced both of the necessity of economy on the one hand, and of the necessity of maintaining inviolate the public credit on the other. No doubt hon. gentlemen say, “Oh, as to the public credit, there can be no question; but let the system of taxation be revised—let the burden be more equally adjusted.” The feeling is, of course, unanimous as to the public credit. Well, Sir, but I would rather have the income-tax in reserve before I come to consider this amended system of taxation.

Suppose that new system to be proposed on the 1st February next, with the certainty that the income-tax must expire on the 5th of April. Now, notwithstanding all the professions of your determination in the abstract to support the public credit, I have so much dread of the failure of this new method of taxation before the 5th of April, that, having a due regard for the public credit, I should like to have the income-tax to fall back upon in the contingency—the possible contingency—of the new system not being relished, or not working successfully. If it should succeed, then you can repeal the income-tax. At all events, its existence will give time for more mature consideration, without shaking the confidence of the public creditor. But I cannot conceive it possible that there will be such a reduction in public expenditure as to enable you to dispense with £5,000,000 per annum. Neither do I think that you could be prepared with a general scheme of taxation likely to command success. My conviction is, that you can propose no tax raising five millions of money which can be collected at any thing like the rate at which the income-tax is levied. You cannot impose a tax returning two and a half millions without going to the expense of one-third more in its collection than the income-tax costs you. For these reasons I shall cordially support the proposal of government for continuing this tax for three years. I do not entertain the shadow of a doubt as to the House assenting to it. If government felt it to be their duty to recommend a strenuous exertion for the purpose of meeting a probable deficit by increased taxation, it would be with the utmost reluctance that I should offer any opposition. I do not mean to blame the government, considering the strong feeling against any increase in the income-tax; I do not mean to blame them for the discretion which they exercised in withdrawing the proposition for that increase; for the circumstances of the times are such that great allowances must be made. As to an increase of revenue, we have no doubt been disappointed in regard to the customs duties; but there never was such a combination of circumstances affecting that increase as that which has existed during the last two years, and by which the trade and commercial energies of the country have been hampered. And, Sir, I feel it to be my duty, in this day of commercial depression, to assert my continued adherence to the principles on which the late remissions took place. I have the utmost confidence in the justice of those principles, although their operation has been interfered with by that combination of events to which I have alluded. Why, Sir, there was the necessity for supporting the people of one part of the empire. Ten millions were raised by way of loan. There was the necessity for the importation of an enormous quantity of grain for home consumption. There was the derangement which took place from other causes in the commercial routine of the country. But, Sir, these events, so far from making me regret the measures which were carried into effect with the view to the improvement of our commercial system, or of causing me to distrust the principles on which these measures were founded—the experience of past events, however disheartening in some respects, has led me, for one, to a totally opposite conclusion to that unfavourable one which has been drawn from it. At the time these measures were proposed, I believed that their principles were sound and good; and I still maintain the most confident expectation that the energies of this country will rise superior to the present pressure, and that we shall live to see the time when the revenue will be as prosperous as it was in 1845. I repeat, we may hope speedily to see a very considerable increase in the ordinary revenue of the country. With that increase, and the retrenchments which may be made, I think that there is every prospect of the finances of the country being placed on a more satisfactory footing than they now stand on. But one of my reasons for consenting to allow the income-tax to be continued for three years is, that only last year, in a time of peace, you were obliged to add £10,000,000 to the debt; and on that very account increased exertion ought to be made to meet the expenditure of the country. I wish that could be done without touching the balances in the exchequer, and risking a greater degree of dependence upon the bank than may be altogether agreeable. But, as I said before, though any proposal for increased exertion on the part of the country would have met with my concurrence, I do not blame the government for withdrawing their original proposal for an income-tax of 5 per cent. I must own I shall be influenced in my support of the proposal made by the government by a reference to the wonderful events which have taken place within a very recent period in a neighbouring country. I think

they are an ample justification for this country not consenting to incur any risk of a larger deficit for a period of three years. I conceive it to be utterly inconsistent with sound policy not to make any reference to events which must have filled us all with astonishment. Of this I am perfectly confident, that the true policy of this country dictates the most complete and absolute abstinence from all interference in the internal affairs of that country in which such a wonderful social revolution has taken place. I hope, however, that we shall not fail to exercise the rights of hospitality. It is of the utmost importance to the interests of humanity, that this country should be a place of refuge for the victims of all great political changes. It has been so in other times, and I trust it will long continue to be so. But when, on former occasions, political exiles, after having been received in this country, and partaken of its hospitality, have taken advantage of their position to disturb monarchical governments in other countries, I have always protested against such an abuse; and I now declare that I apply the same rule to those who would endeavour to disturb a republican government. Whilst, therefore, I trust that this country may continue to be a place of refuge for the victims of political revolutions, I do hope that its hospitality will not be abused for the purpose of making it the focus of intrigues against the government of another country. The same rule which is good for a monarchy is equally good for a republic. I heard with great satisfaction the declaration, that our government has wisely determined to abstain from all interference in the internal concerns of France; and I am convinced that the principle so proclaimed will be acted upon with perfect good faith and scrupulous honour; and that the government will not only abstain from any such interference on its own part, but will discourage any abuse of our hospitality for a purpose of interference on the part of others. I purposely abstain from any more particular allusion to the portentous events which have occurred in France. That country is still in the agonies and throes of a great social revolution. I attach not too much importance to what may appear in this newspaper or in that. A provisional government, merely, is at present established, until a more regular one can be formed; but I venture to express an earnest hope, that those who direct the destinies of France will be content to occupy themselves with their own social condition. I hope it will be in the power of France to exhibit a government strong in its own internal resources—which will be able to reconcile perfect independence with regard for the rights established by treaties—and which will not set us the example of that aggression, that desire for territorial aggrandizement, which may interrupt the peace of Europe, and inflict irreparable misfortune on the whole civilised world.

After several nights' debate, the committee divided on the question, that the words proposed to be left out by Mr. Hume stand part of the question: Ayes, 363; Noes, 138; majority, 225.

## NAVIGATION LAWS.

JUNE 9, 1848.

On the question that the Speaker do leave the chair, to go into a committee of the whole House on the resolutions proposed by her Majesty's government with a view to the repeal of the navigation laws—

Mr. Herries moved the following resolution:—"That it is essential to the national interests of this country to maintain the fundamental principles of the existing navigation laws; subject to such modification as may be best calculated to obviate any proved inconvenience to the commerce of the United Kingdom and its dependencies, without danger to our national strength."

SIR R. PEEL (who rose towards the close of the debate) was met by cries of "Divide!" The right hon. baronet said—After the speeches made by the noble lord (Lord G. Bentinck), the hon. gentleman who spoke last (Mr. Disraeli), and the other hon. gentlemen who have addressed the House during this debate, anxious to explain the grounds on which their votes will be given, I do not make any unreasonable claim on the indulgence of the House if I ask leave to occupy a very much smaller share of your attention for the same purpose. If I could fully acquiesce in the opinions avowed by the noble lord, and by those who concur with him, that the

experience of the last two years has been sufficient to demonstrate the impolicy of those principles of legislation, on which, in the years 1842 and 1846, the commercial tariff of this country was reviewed and regulated, I should not be surprised at their unwillingness to apply the same principles to the commercial marine of the empire. But, Sir, notwithstanding that experience of the last two years, my opinion remains unshaken as to the principles by which your commercial intercourse should be regulated with other countries. If, indeed, you altogether reject from your consideration that peculiar combination of circumstances which has prevented the possibility of any fair trial of the principles then acted upon—if you will shut out from your consideration, that in addition to many other causes of commercial derangement, all operating simultaneously, not only your own country, but every other country of continental Europe with which you have commercial dealings, has been visited by the infliction of famine—if you will omit from your consideration the fact, that the surplus capital which has been heretofore applied to the purchasing of luxuries or of conveniences, has been necessarily absorbed in averting the sufferings which famine engendered—if you will reject all those considerations, it will be easy to draw such conclusions as those to which you have come. But I say it is incumbent on you to show in what one respect there is any connection between the present suffering of this country, which I admit and deplore, and the principles which regulated your commercial policy in 1842 and 1846. It surely is not because you have admitted raw material without duty, that—[Interruption]. Surely this is not a matter to be disposed of by clamour, but by deliberate reason. It is possible the opinions I avow may be erroneous; but, depend on it, you show no confidence in the strength of your own, if you have no better answer to give me than boisterous clamour. Answer me, if you can, these arguments. The principles on which the House acted in 1842 and 1846, in the first place, removed restrictions from the importation of corn, and reduced the duties on raw material. They enabled you to enter into competition with foreign rivals at great comparative advantage—they simplified your commercial code with respect to the entry of all articles necessary for your manufacturers; and it will, I presume, be impossible for any one to contend that the altered tariff injuriously affected the manufactures of the country, so far as these provisions of the new law were concerned. You will say that these provisions might be wise on abstract principles, but that we erred in that we admitted the competition of foreign manufactured articles. That is the ground of objection. You contend that every single article of foreign manufacture introduced in consequence of the new tariff, has contributed to throw out of employment hundreds of those in this country who were engaged in manufactures of the same kind. What a doctrine to hold in this great manufacturing country! Here is a country exporting in declared value manufactured goods to the extent of £58,000,000 annually—a country which, by the exports of its manufactures, is interfering with the employment of every other country on the face of the earth; and in this country such a doctrine is to be established! If other countries adopted these principles, they would naturally look on you, not as the benefactor of mankind, but as the greatest impediment to human happiness, interfering with their labour, and destroying their means of industrious occupation. A small quantity of silk, of gloves, of cotton, and of woollen manufacture, is brought into this country, of the declared value, probably, of one million per annum. You contend that the countries which send here those comparatively small quantities of manufactured goods ought to be denounced, because they are throwing out of employment a number of manufacturers who would otherwise be employed. But in the first place, you must deduct all the manufactured goods of the same kind which came in illicitly, in consequence of our vain attempts at prohibition—you must deduct the quantities of silk and of gloves that were smuggled, in spite of and in consequence of those prohibitory duties of 40 and 50 per cent., which you appear anxious to restore. There appears to be an increase in importation, but it is only apparent, not real. You kept up at your ports a great army of custom-house officers, vainly attempting to prevent the illicit introduction of silks and gloves, and other articles which came in without the payment of duties—which, though subject to the enormous duties of 30 or 40 per cent., were guaranteed to be delivered from Paris at a charge of 10 per cent. By the adoption of a wiser policy, you permitted those articles to enter upon the payment of reduced duties, and there is, in consequence, a nominal increase of imports. But there is no real

increase in the competition which some hon. members so much deplore. In these papers there is the proof that you are exporting £1,315,000 worth of brass and copper goods; £1,000,000 of earthenware; £1,000,000 of haberdashery goods; £17,000,000 of cotton goods; £6,000,000 of cotton yarns, woollen, linen, and silk—all interfering with the industry of other countries; and yet you complain of other countries, because they ask you to permit them to supply you in some very inferior and subordinate degree with certain articles which they can manufacture cheaper than you. How is it possible, when you export £58,000,000 in declared value of articles of British manufacture—how is it possible that the import of any such quantity of silk, cotton, and woollen goods, as has been introduced since 1846, can be assigned as the cause of the distress under which the operatives in some parts of the country are at present labouring? Let us look at the general results. Do not take a single year, but look what is the progressive increase of your exports under the system of free trade. Take successive periods of five years since 1827, and then judge whether there is cause for despondency, although from a combination of extraordinary causes we have been suffering severe distress. Beginning with the year 1827—twenty years ago—I find that in the first period of five years the average declared value of our exports amounted to £37,000,000; in the second they amounted to £43,000,000; in the third, to £49,000,000; and in the fourth to £55,000,000. Now, in the year 1847—a year of severe distress—what was the declared value of our exports? It is said that we do nothing but import—that we have no corresponding amount of exports—and that we purchase all our imports with gold. But what was the declared value of our exports in the year 1847? Observe that in the five years ending 1846, the declared value of our exports was £55,000,000. Well, in the year 1847, they amounted to £58,971,000. They increased from £37,000,000 in the first series of five years, to £55,000,000 in the five years ending 1846; and in 1847—the year of severe distress—they increased to £58,971,000. Now, just recollect what the state of the country was; what were the impediments to our usual exports in consequence of the sudden demand for food. I confess I am surprised to find such an amount of exports under circumstances so unfavourable. I am only referring to these things because some gentlemen have stated that they founded the vote they were to give to-night upon the assumed failure of the principle of free trade. So far from admitting that failure, the experience of the last two years has served to convince me, that it is upon the diminished price of food, and upon that guarantee of its continuance, which unrestricted import affords, that we have to rest the hope of our prosperity.

I am sorry I have been tempted to depart, even for a few moments, from the subject immediately before the House; but I will now strictly address myself to it. Her Majesty's government proposes that we should listen to a proposition for considering the present state of the navigation laws, with a view to extensive and important improvements. In my opinion, we are arrived at one of those periods when, as heretofore, it is desirable to take this matter into serious consideration. If I look to the position of our colonies, in consequence of the application of the principles of free trade to many articles of their produce—if I look to the fact, that many European countries have found out that they have a fair claim to insist on those privileges in navigation which we insist on for ourselves—if I look to our reciprocity treaties, and to the various complicated claims arising under them—if I look to the mutilated and shattered state of the navigation laws as they now exist, I find a number of concurrent reasons for the conclusion, that those laws cannot stand on their present foundation, but that we must consider them with a view to extensive change. In the whole course of the able and ingenious speech of the hon. member for Buckinghamshire—from the personal allusions of which the House derived so much amusement—I must say, that the hon. gentleman scarcely touched the question really before us. If the hon. gentleman could have shown, that the relaxation of the navigation laws would diminish the means of our national defence, or endanger our national security, I think—differing in that respect from the member for the West Riding (Mr. Cobden)—that there would be a fatal objection to any proposal accompanied by such a risk. But it is absolutely necessary for those who maintain the navigation laws to show, that their maintenance is necessary for the purpose of national defence. Surely all presumption is against them. ["Oh, oh!"] Why, the great authority whom you quote in their favour—Adam Smith—begins with an



admission fatal to the navigation laws, unless you can show that they are necessary to our defence. In an emphatic sentence he declares that the navigation laws are unfavourable to commerce, and to the growth of wealth, which is the product of commerce. Surely this is a condemnation of these laws so far as commerce is concerned. How can we doubt that in this great seat of manufacturing industry—the greatest commercial country in the world—how can we doubt, I say, that upon all ordinary commercial principles, obstructions to the free interchange of products are injurious to prosperity? Prove, if you can, that this being a country with an extended colonial empire, with a small military force kept up for our protection, depending altogether on our marine defences, must encourage a commercial marine without reference to commercial considerations; and that is an argument which I will listen to. But will any one contend, apart from the question of national defence, that to throw obstacles in the way of sending our manufactures abroad, and to prevent other countries from dealing with us by enhancing the cost of conveyance, is consistent with sound commercial policy?

The practical question before us is, whether we shall assent to the proposition of her Majesty's government, or to the proposal of my right hon. friend (Mr. Herries), who moves, not a direct negative to the question, but a resolution that it is expedient to maintain the fundamental principles of the existing navigation laws. While he moves this resolution, he distrusts his own doctrine; for he goes on to say, "subject to such modification" as the House may think fit. Where then is the difference between the two propositions? I can understand the object of the right hon. gentleman if he had moved an instruction to the committee; but he says, "I will permit you to go into committee—I will give you no instructions, but I will fetter you with a previous resolution, that you shall not infringe on the fundamental principle of the navigation laws." What, I ask, are those fundamental principles? What was the object which they originally contemplated? According to Adam Smith, national animosity had effected an object which consummate wisdom might have aimed at—namely, the destruction of the naval power and maritime influence of the Dutch. What is the present bearing of your navigation laws upon the marine of those formidable rivals? You deprive yourselves of any intercourse with America, excepting that which comes direct to this country. You can, it is true, take the produce of your own country out to the United States. But the Dutch, whom the navigation laws were intended to injure, can, under the present system, take their produce to the United States, and your produce also, and have a direct advantage over you in your intercourse with America. The whole of the commerce of the United States is open to them. One half of the whole consists in British commerce: that of course is open to them; and, therefore, to those formidable competitors, whose maritime power you sought to destroy by your navigation laws, you have given the whole of the trade with the United States, restricting yourselves to that part of it which consists of direct commercial intercourse with this country. The restrictive principle of the navigation laws, as laid down by Adam Smith, is justly applicable to the coasting trade—the fisheries—the direct carrying trade—and the colonial trade. Well, the coasting trade and the fisheries are to be reserved by government. The carrying trade with other countries—the navigation laws reserved exclusively to British vessels, or foreign vessels importing the produce of their own country. Now, my right hon. friend (Mr. Herries) says that he concurred with Mr. Huskisson in the introduction of reciprocity treaties. Nay, he says that he is prepared to carry them further than they go. Then I reply, that the fundamental principles of the navigation laws are opposed to those treaties. There never was a wider breach made in the navigation laws than that effected by these treaties; and yet my right hon. friend, who is prepared to approve of them, moves a resolution, pledging the House not to permit any infringement of the fundamental principles of the navigation laws. But my right hon. friend says, that he is willing to carry the reciprocity treaties still further. Now, I will convince him that those who rely upon his assistance have given a very decided opinion, that the introduction of reciprocity treaties was a violation of the principle of the navigation laws fatal to British commerce. In the committee, Mr. Young was asked—"Do you consider that the navigation law, as it now stands, affords adequate protection to British ships?—No, I don't think it does, because the principles upon which it is founded are entirely

abrogated with reference to direct trade with all the countries with which we have reciprocity treaties."

And Mr. Richmond says, in answer to a question:—"I cannot consider that the navigation laws afford us much protection now; they are completely mutilated. Every reciprocity treaty has taken something away. I was not aware that there was so little left as there is. In fact, I consider the navigation laws virtually repealed now."

This is the evidence of a gentleman of the highest respectability, one who has been examined no less than four times before committees of this House. He and Mr. Young are the two witnesses put forward as men of experience and practical knowledge, on whom the greatest reliance can be placed, and they declare that those very reciprocity treaties to which my right hon. friend was a party, and which he is prepared to extend, have so mutilated the navigation laws that hardly a remnant of them is left. And yet my right hon. friend will not allow you to go into committee unless we are fettered with the resolution, that we will maintain the fundamental principle of the navigation laws. If in committee we should propose to touch the colonial trade, my right hon. friend will exhibit his fundamental principle, and scare us back within the proper limits to our interference. But why should not Mr. Richmond exhibit his fundamental principle also, and show you that the reciprocity treaties are the fatal breach in the navigation laws? The coasting trade, whether wisely or not, is to be reserved, and the fisheries are to be reserved; and my right hon. friend being ready to extend the reciprocity treaties, there only remains your colonial intercourse to be considered. Now, with respect to that intercourse, what changes have not been made? Since the day when Adam Smith wrote, your colonial intercourse has been constantly modified according to the necessities of the case. It is on a perfectly different footing from what it was then, and necessarily so. Adam Smith, writing about the year 1775, did not foresee the separation of the North American colonies from this country, and the changes consequent thereupon. From the time in which he wrote, scarcely three years had passed without a very considerable violation of the main principle of the navigation laws; and at every period of unavoidable change we find the same predictions of ruin to British shipping which I hear on the present occasion. In 1782, when you proposed to admit Ireland to a direct intercourse with the West Indies, the House of Commons resisted the proposition. In vain the government urged the House to agree to the motion; the port of Liverpool declared, that if the privileges of dealing directly in coffee and sugar with the West Indies were granted to Ireland, she would be reduced to her original insignificance. So it was with every other relaxation. Sir, it was in 1826, when Mr. Huskisson, not acting as a theoretical speculator, but driven by the necessity of the case, proposed the reciprocity treaties. He proposed those treaties, because the alternative offered was either reciprocity of intercourse or retaliation of exclusion. That period is again fast approaching; for foreign countries will ere long retaliate upon you the exclusive system you establish in your own favour. You will then be driven either to retaliation, which is the war of differential duties, or to place other countries with respect to shipping, and duties upon shipping, upon the same footing with yourselves. There have been continued relaxations of the navigation laws; and it is well to inquire whether or no any one of these relaxations have clipped the wings of British shipping, and diminished the naval power of the nation. In 1833 there was raised a warning cry; and let me quote it here to put the House upon its guard against those gloomy predictions of approaching ruin, of which we have heard so much. In 1833, the shipowners' society, talking of the state of British shipping under the navigation laws, declared—"That the declining quality and estimation of British tonnage, and the approaching decay and ruin of the British shipowner, may now be viewed as incontrovertible positions."

Be it so. If the ruin and decay of British shipping under the navigation laws are "incontrovertible positions," shall we run much risk in modifying those laws? But in point of fact the shipowners' society was wrong. In 1833, the very time when the ruin and decay of the shipowner might be viewed as "incontrovertible positions,"—in that very year the British tonnage on the register was 2,634,000 tons. In 1846, after the progressive application of the principle of reciprocity treaties, and consequent infraction of the navigation laws, the amount of British tonnage was

no less than 3,817,000 tons, showing an increase of 1,183,000 tons. Mr. Richmond says—"I am sure that I do not exaggerate when I say, that one half of the capital embarked in shipping during the last twenty-five years has been lost, and that the other half, to a very great extent, is totally unproductive of profit. Indeed, so little is there left of the navigation laws, that I look upon them as virtually repealed."

Now, this gentleman is a great authority on these matters. According to him, under those very navigation laws, the fundamental principles of which you won't let us change, one-half of the capital embarked in shipping during the last twenty-five years has been lost, and the other half remained almost wholly unproductive. Such is the opinion of him who was four times examined before committees of this House; such statements are made, not merely to excite your sympathy, but to enlighten your judgment; and if one-half the capital embarked in the shipping trade has been sunk, and the other half is unproductive of profit, can it be for the benefit of your commerce, or your manufactures, or your shipping, that such a state of things should continue? Will the discontinuance of it affect other and equally important interests? Will it endanger our maritime superiority? I find, from returns on the table, that notwithstanding the repeated breaches in the old navigation laws, there has been a progressive increase in the number of our ships, in the tonnage, and in the number of men employed. I will only go into the general facts; I will not detain the House with details. I will take the year 1836, that I may not subject myself to the charge of selecting a year favourable for my own views. In 1836, the tonnage of British shipping was 2,792,000 tons; in 1842, it was 3,419,000 tons; and in 1847, a year when free trade, according to the predictions of some, ought to have been fatal to our commercial marine, it amounted to 3,952,000 tons. Then take the number of seamen. The number of seamen in the British commercial marine, in 1814, was 172,000; in 1827, the number was 154,000; in 1842, the number was 214,000; and in 1847, it was 232,000. It is upon the extent of your commercial marine and number of your seamen, that your main reliance must be placed in the event of war. As to the question of impressment, the difficulty inherent in that question applies equally to your system whether you maintain the navigation laws or abrogate them. In either case you may resort, if you think fit, to impressment; but is not the time arrived when it is important to consider whether you can safely rely upon impressment? I do not say one word in favour of the abandonment of that system. It may be necessary at the breaking out of a war to resort to it; but consider the material changes that have taken place in your naval marine as well as in your commercial marine; consider that, after the duration of a very long peace, the men whom you impress will be much less qualified to perform the duties of a man-of-war than they used to be, when there was only a short interval of peace—when there were rapid alternations of peace and war. Consider how much more important it will be for your naval security to have skilled and experienced mariners. Consider the progress steam navigation has made; how little reliance can be placed on mere impressment to supply the means of navigating steam ships. All these things are deserving most serious consideration. If the repeal of the navigation laws would impair your commercial marine, this would be a powerful argument against their repeal. But my opinion is, that this country, without such factitious aid, can enter into competition with any country in the world. Mr. Richmond says, that under the system of protection, the shipowners have lost half their capital, and derived no profit from the other half. The member for Buckinghamshire, speaking of the Baltic trade, remarked that the Baltic powers have ports that are closed with ice for four months of the year. Compare, then, the favoured position and climate of this country with that of the Baltic powers; consider the enormous natural disadvantage under which, as maritime powers, they labour, in having their ports for four months of the year closed with ice. With those powers, as to the general commerce of the world, you surely have no need to fear competition. Then take France; France has a strict system of navigation laws, and what has it done for her mercantile marine? Do you fear competition with that country? Does not the state of the mercantile marine of France suggest a doubt whether maritime superiority does not depend upon natural causes, upon the habits, position, and necessities of a country, and not upon navigation laws? No navigation laws, however exclusive, can give to France a commercial marine that can enter into

competition with yours. Now, take the United States. The evidence of your increasing marine as compared with that of the United States, in all cases wherein you enter into fair competition, has been most satisfactory as to the ability of this country to compete with America. The hon. gentleman, the member for Buckinghamshire, referred to the trade with Rio Janeiro, and added that in that port there was a large number of American ships as compared with British ships. With great deference to the hon. gentleman, I do not think that that has any thing to do with the question. There is a direct intercourse between Rio Janeiro and the United States. Rio Janeiro takes her sugar to the United States, and they in return send their wheat to Rio Janeiro, and there is no doubt a special intercourse between them with which it is impossible for us to compete; but it is no proof of our general inability to enter into competition with the United States, that in a port where there is a large direct trade with the United States, we should have fewer ships than that power. I will not venture into statistical details, but I must refer to the evidence of one witness who made a deep impression on my mind. That witness was Captain Briggs. He was master of an American liner, and employed in the direct communication between the United States and England. I never saw a witness whose evidence appeared to me more entitled to credit. If there was an exception, it was in his unwillingness to give an answer unfavourable to the marine of this country, as compared with his own. We examined him on the important point, whether or no we are unable to compete with the United States, on account of any circumstance that can justly entitle our marine to protection? We are told, that we cannot compete with the ships of some countries on account of the low rate of wages paid to the shipwrights. In the first place, I believe that a shipwright in this country, at 6s. a day, is worth three times more than the shipwright of some countries who receives only half the sum. It is impossible to estimate the value of labour by the amount of wages paid to the labourer. We went through the whole of this question with Captain Briggs. We asked him, "What are the wages of a shipwright in America?" His answer was—"They are 10s. a day—two dollars on the average have for the last four or five years been paid to an American shipwright." It is quite clear, therefore, that if you rely on the fact, that Norwegian ships can be built at less expense than yours on account of the comparative lowness of the wages paid to the Norwegian shipwrights, you must admit that you, who pay only 5s. or 6s. a day for a British shipwright, a first-rate workman, can compete with great advantage with the Americans, who pay 10s. a day to an American shipwright. Then the wages of seamen have been relied on. We asked Captain Briggs what wages he paid? He said—to an American seaman 64s. a month. Those were very high wages; but we asked him whether he always employed American seamen? He answered that he did not, but constantly took English seamen from Liverpool. We asked him whether he paid them 64s.? He said, No; he took English sailors at Liverpool, and paid them 50s.; consequently, an American seaman receives 14s. a month more than English seamen: the wages, then, both of shipwrights and seamen are greatly in our favour. We then proceeded to examine him as to the comparative expense of shipbuilding in the two countries. Now, the member for Buckinghamshire says, he detests the tar and pitch of this question; but the tar and the pitch and comparative expense of building are most important elements of the question. It may be very agreeable to select this or that gentleman and hold him up to ridicule; but the real points of this case that are worthy of the consideration of rational men, alarmed about our national strength, are not whether this or that gentleman has involved himself in some inconsistency, but whether we can compete with foreign countries without exclusive privileges, unfavourable to commerce; and you must listen to some of these details if you wish to form a sound judgment. As to the Baltic trade, I think you cannot be under any apprehension. I want to show that there is no fear of France, who, with her strict navigation laws, has a dwindling marine; and I want also to show you, that the prosperity and increasing shipping of America are not inconsistent with your own; nay, that they are rather the indications of your prosperity. Open a free commercial intercourse with the United States, and there will be a reciprocal benefit. The increase of your prosperity, will, as a natural and necessary consequence, promote the prosperity of the American marine. But I return to the question, whether you are able or not to compete with the United States. We asked Captain

Briggs, "How do you stand in respect to timber?" Captain Briggs said, "The timber comes from South Carolina and from Florida—there is a shipment and an unshipment;" and he very much doubted whether or no, as this country was a great emporium for timber, the Americans had any great advantage over us. We asked him, "Where do you get your sails and canvass from?"—"From England." "Your ironwork?"—"We import that from England." "Your copper?"—"From England." "Your cordage?"—"We make cordage in the United States, but we import the hemp from Russia; and cordage is 10 per cent. higher in America than in England." What is the general result of this comparison? There are shipwrights' wages, 10s. a day; seamen's wages 14s. a month higher than your own; timber nearly on an equality; and, if there is any inequality, you have the power to redress it; in sails and canvass you have the advantage; in ironwork the advantage—nay, they take their ironwork from you; in copper you have the advantage; in cordage an advantage of 10 per cent. Why, then, should you be afraid to compete with America, either in the building or the navigation of ships? We asked Captain Briggs, "What is the cost of building a 12-years' ship in England?" Every gentleman present, I presume, knows what a 12-years' ship—A, number one—is. Captain Briggs said, "I calculate that a 12-years' ship can be built and fitted in England as cheaply as a 10-years' ship in America." Still there were points in which the American had an advantage over us, which it was impossible for him to conceal; and let me ask you to consider seriously what are the points in which that advantage consists. We asked Captain Briggs—"Do you make your passage quicker?"—"Yes, by some days quicker than an English ship." "How do you account for that?" He said, that the American captains were better paid than the English; that they were paid in a different manner; that the English captains were paid by the month, while the Americans have a commission on the amount of freight; that they have a double interest in quick voyages, because they are paid, not by fixed periods of time, but by the voyage, and because they have a direct interest in keeping the cargo clean and dry. He told us that he never permitted spirits to be drunk on board—that he had introduced the temperance system—that he found all the men willing to conform to it; and in stress of weather, when it was necessary to be on the rigging all night, temperance men were better able to bear it than men who were accustomed to drink spirits. Now, as to those particulars in which the American captain has an advantage, what claim have you for protection, If, indeed, you had to bring your canvass from America, and your copper, and your iron, and to pay 10s. a day to shipwrights, and 64s. a month to seamen, you might have some claim; but you have no right to claim protection on account of the superior skill or conduct of either American captains or men. Nay, consider this: if the effect of your protective system has been to induce your mariners to place a false reliance upon it; if they thought, "We are protected, and therefore we may neglect the precautions which other men take;" then, not only is there no pretence for giving protection, but protection is the cause of your inferiority. If you neglect habits of temperance—if you will not pay attention to the stowing of the cargo—if you will not give the captain a direct interest in making a rapid voyage, and in landing his cargo dry and clean; be not surprised that the British or American merchant gives a preference to an American ship; and do not ask the House of Commons to continue to you protection, raising the rate of freight against the manufacturer and the consumer in this country, because you neglect the precautions which ensure the superiority of your rivals. If this evidence be true in these details as to copper and ironwork, as to sails and canvass and cordage, is there any reason to fear competition with that power which you must admit to be your only formidable competitor? Now, take the case with respect to your own colonies. Can you long resist the claim of Canada? If the freight from New York is so much lower than the freight from Montreal, that the citizen of the United States brings his produce to this country at a cheaper rate—nay, he seduces Canadian produce to come by New York instead of down the St. Lawrence—how long can we resist the claim of the Canadian to be admitted to equal privileges in British ports with the American? Is it fair? Consider the peculiar position of that country. Can we subject Canadian produce to a disadvantage in British markets, unless it can be proved conclusively, that for the purpose of national defence we must retain the exclusive possession of this colonial trade? I believe we cannot in justice maintain that principle. Yet to

abandon it will be a violation of a fundamental principle of the navigation law. Now, will you consent to enter into the committee with a previous restriction that shall prevent you from doing that which the interests of Canada, and justice to Canada, require? Would it not be a farce to enter into that committee with a pledge, which my right hon. friend will construe into an obligation, that you shall not admit the produce of Canada on the same footing with respect to freight as you admit the produce of America? Upon these grounds I come to the conclusion that it is befitting this House to consider the state of the navigation laws, and with a view to an extensive alteration of them. I shall reserve for separate discussion many—I am loth to call them details, because they are in themselves of the utmost importance; but I wish to confine myself as far as possible to the main question. With respect to the policy of opening the coasting trade, or continuing the restriction, I shall reserve that point at present. With respect to the policy of requiring from a British ship-owner that he shall have three-fourths of his crew composed of British seaman, upon that point, also, I should wish to say nothing at present. With regard to the mode of making the alterations which the right hon. gentleman proposes, I wish to reserve that most important matter for that mature consideration which it fully deserves. That mature consideration cannot be given without a full inquiry into the operation of the principle by which our reciprocity treaties are regulated; but I will throw out one or two observations—they are for consideration only—upon this subject. I think, with my right hon. friend (Mr. Gladstone), that the first impression is in favour of proceeding by reciprocity treaties; the first impression is, that the Crown should be empowered to grant concessions to any power which is willing to make equivalent concessions to us. But on the other hand it is deserving of consideration whether or no these reciprocity treaties are not in themselves sources of very great difficulties. Reciprocity treaties are of two kinds—the one comprehending that which is called “the most favoured nation clause;” the other requiring that you shall extend to a certain power the same privileges which another power possesses, provided the former will make the same concessions to you which have been made by the latter. This seems simple enough; but when you come to act practically upon those treaties, you find they involve very great difficulties. My right hon. friend says—and there is some truth in the observation—that there is a difference between the case of differential duties on navigation, and on the import of goods under a tariff. I admit there is; but still it is most difficult to determine whether the concessions which a given country is willing to make, or, in fact, has the power to make, are equivalent to the concessions which have been made by some other country, the commercial demands and commercial produce of which may be of a totally different nature. And with regard to reciprocity treaties, I foresee the risk of great difficulty in the event of war. The power which the government proposes to retain of reimposing restriction, it will be found very difficult to exercise. The system would be an inversion of the relations between the Crown and parliament. Under it the House of Commons will be the source of favour—the House of Commons will relax, the Crown will restrain. The House of Commons will give universal privileges, and in the course of four or five years the invidious and difficult duty will be thrown upon the Crown of withdrawing the privileges which the House of Commons has granted. I wish the ministers to consider the policy of giving a temporary duration to the act, so that at a certain period the privileges conferred by act of parliament would terminate without the Crown being called upon to fulfil the painful duty of reimposing restrictions. Suppose the trade were to be opened for a period of five years; at the end of that period the privileges given would necessarily expire, and every country would have notice that they had the means of averting the re-establishment of restrictions by entering into some arrangement with this country. I would rather see the object effected in that manner than by new reciprocity treaties. I had rather that other countries reserved to themselves the right of independent legislation—that America, for instance, should do what she has to do by voluntary legislation than by treaty. The same difficulty applies to the power which the government wishes to take of reimposing restrictions. [“Divide!”] I am aware that the argument is exhausted, and feel obliged to the House for the attention which it has afforded me. I advise hon. members, before they determine to exclude all improvement of these navigation laws, to consider that this great shipping trade and

the increase of the commercial marine are dependent, not on the navigation laws, but on the prosperity of commerce. Whatever tends to promote that prosperity tends to increase your commercial marine. You rely on the authority of Mr. Huskisson. You confidently predict that Mr. Huskisson would never have consented to the proposed relaxation of the navigation laws. But Mr. Huskisson dealt with the necessities of the times, and went as far as he safely could in relaxing these laws. Mr. Huskisson may have said at the time that the colonial intercourse and the coasting trade must be preserved intact; but he felt the necessity of making those modifications in the fundamental principles of those laws which were rendered necessary by the change of circumstances and the demands of British interests. Instead of relying upon a particular observation of Mr. Huskisson with regard to the colonial trade or the coasting trade, let us rather advert to the broad principles which he laid down of permanent and universal application. This is an extract from Mr. Huskisson's speech on colonial policy, which contains truths applicable to the altered circumstances of the present time, and applicable to your colonial intercourse and colonial empire at all times and under all circumstances. Mr. Huskisson said—"These, it may be objected, are but vague and speculative improvements, which may never be realised. It may be so; but if I am called upon to point out specifically the precise mode and course of operations by which the benefits of this new system are to make their way into the West Indies, I have no hesitation to avow that I can do no such thing. Yet, in making this avowal, let me remind the committee that in 1813, when, upon the renewal of the East India Company's charter, their monopoly of trade was greatly relaxed, the wisest and most experienced men in that trade could not point out, precisely, what new channels of commerce could be opened with the East Indies. Nay, they denied that any new channels could be explored by the private trader, or that any benefits could accrue to India from the relaxation of the former monopoly. But new channels have been explored, new benefits have been conferred; proving, as the history of all modern commerce proves, that whenever you give a free scope to capital, to industry, to the stirring intelligence and active spirit of adventure which so strongly mark the present times, you are in fact opening new roads to enterprise, and affording new facilities to the interchange of the productions of the different regions of the earth—that interchange, of which the advantages must be reciprocal, and of which the extension to new countries is, perhaps, the surest harbinger of their improvement and civilisation."

These are great truths, the recognition of which is calculated to promote the prosperity of your colonies, to extend their commercial relations, to bring them into contact with European countries. Under such a system the ties which bind to you your colonial dependencies would be strengthened, not by the exercise of power, not by restraint, but by the conviction that England was prepared to abandon that principle of colonial policy hitherto adopted by every country in the world, namely, to make the interests of the colonies subservient to the interests of the mother country.

The amendment was negatived, and the House went into committee; the navigation acts were considered, and the House resumed. Committee to sit again.

## SUGAR DUTIES.

JUNE 29, 1848.

In the debate on the motion that the Speaker do leave the chair to go into committee on the Sugar Duties—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: Mr. Speaker, I should most imperfectly express my feelings if, in the course of the observations I am about to make, I were to come to a conclusion, or even to utter a word, which should appear to imply indifference to the condition of our transmarine possessions. With the depressed condition of our colonies—with the difficulties and embarrassments of those who are immediately connected with them in various relations, I feel the deepest sympathy; and sorry should I be justly to incur the reproach directed by the hon. member for the University of Oxford (Sir R. H. Inglis) against some, that they are disposed to prefer mere pecuniary and material interests to the higher considerations of public policy which

are interwoven with this great question. I consider it would be utterly inconsistent with the spirit by which a great empire has been founded—utterly inconsistent with the spirit by which a great empire can be maintained—were we now, in a time of colonial depression and distress, to enter into cold calculations whether it is for the pecuniary interest of this country to maintain our connection with the colonies. I repudiate all such considerations. I remember that those colonies have long been identified with us—I recollect that they stood by our side during the great conflicts that convulsed Europe in the course of the last century—I recollect during the last century, in 1783, on the declaration of independence by many provinces of this country, these colonies remained united to us, and stood faithful under all temptations to revolt. I remember that during that greater conflict which ended with the downfall of Napoleon, these colonies, on many occasions, bore the brunt of the storm of war—that they were the conductors by which its fury was diverted from our shores. I recollect that in our failures and defeats, as they had shared in our victories, they shared in our dejection. No, I will not do them the injustice to say they were ever dejected and dispirited. They had the spirit of Englishmen, and saw in defeat and failure only a motive for renewed exertions. Their determination was only the more confirmed to uphold the honour and power of the empire. I approach this question, then, with the deep feeling that those higher considerations ought to prevail over mere pecuniary and material interests. Independently of these, there are social considerations of a yet higher order. I utterly reject the argument that because 95 per cent. of the population of those colonies are prospering, we can safely neglect the interests of the remaining 5 per cent. The smaller the proportion of the white population, the more important is it for the great purposes of civilisation that we should cherish that population. Whatever may be the temporal prosperity of the negro population of the West Indies, I cannot conceive a greater misfortune to the cause of civilisation, refinement, and humanity, than the decay and ruin of the white population. The white population forms a barrier against the encroachments of barbarism. If that white population were annihilated, the cause of civilisation, of religion, of growing refinement, would suffer in an incalculable degree. It is with such feelings—with a deep conviction of the importance of these colonies, taking the warmest interest in their welfare, cherishing the deepest sympathy with their present distress—that I approach the discussion of this great question. The severity of their distress is admitted on all hands. On all hands a sincere desire exists to provide, if possible, a remedy for that distress. To any of the ordinary objections to special interference on our part in favour of the colonies, I am not disposed to attach importance. I have always felt that the case of the colonies is a peculiar one; that on account of our past legislation, they have a claim to be exempt from rules which are justly applied to ordinary cases. I shall not oppose to the interests of the colonies, those of the consumers in this country: first, because the interests of the consumer are coincident with those of those colonies; and, secondly, because no interest of a merely pecuniary character ought to prevail against those higher interests which affect the welfare of the empire.

The severity of colonial distress being admitted, a proposal is made by the government for the remedy of that distress. That proposal is met by a proceeding, justifiable, possibly, under certain circumstances, but, at least, of a novel kind. It is proposed by the hon. member for Droitwich (Sir J. S. Pakington) that we should assent to a resolution, the effect of which is to refuse consideration of the plan offered by her Majesty's government—to send it back as utterly inefficient and inept—to say, in substance, to the government, "Take back your plan: it is so impossible to amend it that we will not even listen to it. Take it away, and return with a better plan; if you do not, there are others who are ready to propose one." You, who support this resolution, object to the present law. You are not content to be passive. You are not content with inaction. You admit that some decisive step is necessary—that the present law must be altered; but you refuse to enter on the consideration of that plan which is proposed to you by the government. Now, recollect the state of the West India colonies—recollect they are suffering great distress; that they are impatient for a remedy; that they are looking to you to satisfy their expectations on that head. This resolution of my hon. friend implies that the distress can be remedied by legislation. The resolution has no import if it cannot. It assumes that these calamities



which have befallen the West Indies, or the Mauritius, or the East Indies, are not beyond the reach of legislation—that the case admits of a remedy, but that the government remedy is not the true one. Now, if you carry that resolution, there will be great triumph. The vote will be wafted to the colonies on wings swifter than those of the wind; but the very first mail that returns will bring this demand, “What are those more effectual remedies which you, who are parties to this resolution, have to propose for the relief of the West Indies?” To that demand you must give an answer. The noble lord (Lord G. Bentinck) can give an answer to the colonists. It is contained in the resolutions of his committee. I have read the proceedings of that committee. Occupied as I have been by other committees and by other business, yet, from the great importance of the noble lord’s committee, I have read the whole of the evidence taken; and no consideration shall prevent me from expressing the opinion, that a flood of light has been thrown upon the position of the West India colonies which could not have been thrown upon it, unless that committee had been presided over by a chairman bringing to the performance of his duty the assiduity, the zeal, and the knowledge which were displayed by the noble lord. Now, the noble lord is ready to propose a resolution which justifies him in rejecting the plan of the government. That resolution would, no doubt, correspond with the draught of the report prepared by the noble lord, but negatived by the committee. The noble lord, therefore, can personally fulfil the expectations which will be raised in the West Indies by the House assenting to the amendment of my hon. friend. But, unless this House has something effectual to propose—something much more effectual than the plan suggested by the government—the result of our adopting the amendment of my hon. friend will only be to aggravate the feeling of disappointment which the colonists already experienced. If we assent to the resolution of my hon. friend (Sir James Pakington), what is it that we intend to offer to the West India body by way of relief? Can we revert to the measure of 1845? Can we again establish the distinction between sugar the produce of slave-labour, and sugar the produce of free-labour? Sir, I, for one, deeply regret that a further experiment was not made of that measure. I am not satisfied with the argument that the opening of the market of Great Britain and Ireland to slave-grown sugar, was of no advantage to those who produced it. I am not satisfied with the argument that the vacuum caused by our diverting free-labour sugar from the continent was immediately supplied by slave-labour sugar, and that therefore the exclusion of slave-labour sugar, from the British market was nodiscouragement to the production of slave-labour sugar. Whatever our theoretical reasoning on the subject may be, the undoubted fact is that encouragement was given both in Cuba and in Brazil, to the production of slave-grown sugar by the measure which admitted it into the British market. The planters connected with those colonies did consider the admission of their produce into the English market a practical benefit; they considered the direct and immediate admission of the article into the British market a greater advantage to them than any indirect benefit which they might receive from the filling up of the vacuum in the markets of the continent. If I had had the direction of the councils of her Majesty at that period, I certainly would have advised a more extended trial of the measure of 1845. In 1846 a change of government took place, and I assented to the measure proposed by the noble lord for the admission of slave-grown sugar. I assented to it upon the grounds fully explained by me—grounds in a great degree connected with the state of parties at the time, and the public evils in that state of parties of another change of government within the period of six weeks. But I did not give that vote merely from a desire on general grounds to arrest the evils of another change of administration. I did not exclude from my consideration the special interests of the colonies, as they could be affected by that change. A protracted conflict on this very question must be the result; and who could doubt that the great alterations made in 1845 and 1846 in our commercial code by the further application of the principles of free-trade to many articles of foreign produce, would have rendered the struggle to exempt the produce of our sugar colonies from the application of those principles one of very doubtful issue? Could any government then to be constituted have given an assurance to the British colonial proprietor that slave-labour sugar would be permanently excluded from the British market? Impossible. The very fact of the defeat of a government upon the sugar question would have totally changed the position of

that question. Their successors could only have proposed an annual sugar bill. Every year there would have been a renewal of the question. Every year the colonists would have been dreading the issue of this continual conflict, while the inhabitants of Cuba and Brazil, on the other hand, would have hoped that its result would be the admission of their produce into the British market. The noble lord proposed a permanent sugar bill, having this good effect at least that it terminated that annual conflict which would have ensued on the subject of the sugar duties, had no such measure been introduced. Had we defeated the bill of 1846, what would have been the consequence? The certainty of the future struggle would have prevented the application of capital in the colonies; it would have deferred the establishment of an improved system of culture and of commercial confidence. These were the considerations, as well as an unwillingness to disturb the government under the very peculiar circumstances under which they had assumed power, which induced me to consent to the measure of 1846. I must now consider the principle of that measure finally settled. Can you now re-establish a difference between the produce of free-labour and the produce of slave-labour? The Crown, acting upon the advice of its ministers, has admitted the produce of Cuba upon the footing of the produce of Venezuela and the United States. It has acknowledged the claim of Spain, founded on treaty, to have the produce of Cuba so admitted. I do not perceive in the report of the committee, or in the resolutions of the noble lord (Lord G. Bentinck), any advice to re-establish the distinction between sugar the produce of free-labour, and sugar the produce of slave-labour. The noble lord himself, one of the ablest and warmest advocates of the West India interest, sees the insuperable difficulties in the way of re-establishing that difference. But this is a most serious consideration. It compels me to banish from the minds of the West India colonists that hope which the hon. baronet (Sir R. H. Inglis) is willing to cherish, namely, that the distinction admitted by the act of 1845 can, after being destroyed, be again established, between free-labour sugar and slave-labour sugar. I have not that hope then to hold out to the West Indies. I have felt it my duty to consider every other measure that has been suggested which may be thought likely to afford them relief. I will take one that has been suggested by the committee—I mean the reduction of the colonial expenditure. I must at once declare that after having read the evidence laid before the committee, it has left an impression upon my mind that the colonial expenditure does admit of very great reduction. The public establishments of many of the colonies are founded upon a scale of imperial dignity. When I review the enormous expenditure, especially in the Mauritius and Jamaica, I am prepared to hold out to the colonists this prospect of relief, at least, that there shall be, as there ought to be, a most determined attempt to reduce the public expenditure within the narrowest limits compatible with the welfare of the colonies themselves. There is no justification at any time, but more especially at this time of their distress, for keeping up any expenditure not necessary for their welfare. I wish to see the alliance between the colonies and the mother country maintained and cherished. I wish to recognise the colonists as subjects of the Queen, entitled to every sympathy and consideration to which the inhabitants of Lancashire or Yorkshire are entitled—with the same claim that a wise economy shall be enforced as the rule of government. I say a wise economy, for mere parsimony might be injurious to their best interests: it would be miserable economy, for instance, for the sake of saving some £2,000 a year, to deprive your colonies of the services in the administration of colonial affairs of such men as Lord Dalhousie, Lord Harris, and Lord Elgin. A niggardly reward to men of their eminence would be injurious to the colonists themselves. I doubt, however, whether it would not be just, speaking of the salaries of the governors of the colonies, that this country should take upon itself the payment of them, rather than impose that charge upon the colonies themselves. Having reference to imperial rather than to colonial considerations, this country should, I think, sustain the charge of the salaries of the governors. The governors of your colonies should be independent of the colonists, so far as concerns the pecuniary remuneration of their labours. They should be able to give a free and unbiassed opinion on all measures calculated to favour the colonists, without being suspected of seeking any reward for their liberality. They should also be in a position to overrule the wishes of those over whom they are placed, when a sense of public duty requires it, without running

the risk of having their worldly fortunes impaired. With respect to the remaining portion of the colonial establishments—I, for one, would consent to any reduction of appointments or salaries which is consistent with the proper governing of the colonies. But while I thus speak, I beg to be understood as not by any means implying censure against the present government in particular. I speak solely for the public interest, and am perfectly ready to take any blame which may justly attach to the government preceding that of the noble lord, for not having given more early consideration to this subject. I cannot but think that if subordinate colonial offices were made more accessible to the natives of the colonies—men acquainted with their local interests and wants—those offices would still be objects of ambition even with considerably reduced emoluments. Let me not, however, be understood to mean that you are to confine offices in the colonies to native colonists. It is desirable that there should be some who, exempt from local prejudices, may serve as a check on others connected by birth, or purely local ties, with the colonies. But these enormous salaries, attached to almost all the offices under that of governor, appear to me to admit of a great reduction. I apprehend that this has been admitted by the government, and that they are prepared to make every retrenchment consistent with the welfare of the colonies. I did not understand that means of relief to be excluded from their general plan. With respect to the police laws for the purpose of preventing squatting and vagrancy, whatever you can do, consistently with justice and the real freedom of the negro labourer, ought to be done. How this can be done it may be extremely difficult to determine, without the advantages of local knowledge and experience.

I will now review the grievances alleged by the colonists themselves, and that which they demand by way of relief. I will take the petition which was presented to this House by planters, merchants, and others, of Hanover, in the island of Jamaica, so recently as December, 1847. They demand the removal of all discriminating duties which their fellow-subjects in Great Britain retain for the protection of their own produce. They say that the British distiller, in addition to the advantage he enjoys over the West Indians, by their distance from the market, has a protection against colonial rum of 9d. a gallon. I understand, that among the measures contemplated by her Majesty's government, a reduction of the differential duty from 9d. to 4d. is in contemplation. I cannot, therefore, hold out to the colonists any hope of any greater reduction of the differential duty than that proposed by the government. I apprehend the government will have some serious difficulties to contend with in carrying even that amount of reduction. But so far as the amount is concerned, there appears a disposition on the part of the government to give in that respect a full measure of relief. The next ground upon which it is alleged that their fellow-subjects in Great Britain retain protection which is denied to them is this:—"The British shipowner is protected by the navigation laws, and compels your memorialists to pay a freight nearly double the amount they would pay if they were permitted to ship in other vessels. A large amount of American shipping leaves the island of Jamaica in ballast, and but for the protection afforded to the British shipowner, your memorialists would obtain their staves, provisions, and other American commodities at a cheaper freight, as well as transmit their sugar and rum."

That appears to me a very reasonable complaint; but it is rather discouraging to those by whom that complaint is admitted to be just, and who are seeking to apply a remedy, to be told by other parties representing the same interests—"The repeal of the navigation laws will be of no benefit to us; the producers of sugar in Cuba and Brazil will derive greater advantage than we shall from the repeal of those laws."

Now, when I find that so lately as December, 1847, the inhabitants of Hanover, in Jamaica, distinctly declared that, on account of the navigation laws, they pay for freights nearly double what their competitors pay; and when, being willing to apply a remedy, we are told it is not worth having—I will pause before I am a party to the holding out of very sanguine expectations as to the power of parliament to afford relief to the colonists.

It is difficult at the present moment to take any general view of the position of the West India colonies, and of the measures that can be adopted for their relief, because one great element in the consideration of the case is wanting. It is un-

certain what course ought to be taken with respect to the squadron placed on the coast of Africa for the suppression of the slave-trade. A committee is now sitting which has taken important evidence on that subject, and it is greatly to be wished that in discussing this question, we had before us the evidence, the opinion of the committee, and the intentions of the government. A large expense is borne by this country for the maintenance of the squadron on the African coast. Suppose we find that the squadron is, in point of fact, ineffectual for the purpose for which it is destined, we should still be compelled to maintain a certain amount of force in consequence of our engagements with America and France. Nevertheless, if we could convince those powers that we do not seek to be relieved from our engagements on account of pecuniary considerations, but *bona fide* because the united squadron has proved to be of little avail, it is not impossible that we and our allies might mutually relieve each other from existing obligations, and enter into some new arrangement which might more effectually attain the object which all have in view. I give no positive opinion on this point. I greatly fear that the sudden withdrawal of the united squadron from the African coast would increase the evils of the slave-trade; but not having access to the evidence which has been taken before the committee, I will not venture to express a positive opinion. If, however, we could make a material saving by the withdrawal of our squadron from the coast of Africa, this country would probably be willing to apply a considerable portion of the sum thus saved to other means, if such can be devised, more effectual for the suppression of the slave-trade. Any view of the present condition of the West Indies, must be, I repeat, necessarily imperfect whilst uncertainty prevails as to the ultimate decision with respect to this branch of the question.

Two suggestions for the relief of the colonies are offered: one, that a great increase in the supply of labour shall take place by immigration; the other, that assistance shall be given to the West India colonies by means of protecting duties. With respect to immigration I understand the government to admit the principle of the measure, and to propose that this country shall provide the means, by way of loan, of increasing the supply of labour in the colonies. I understand that £500,000 are to be advanced for that purpose. Though I do not attach the importance which some do to an increased supply of labour, I cannot go quite so far on the other side as the under secretary for the colonies, who said, by way of encouraging us to grant the money, "If I had this £500,000 I should not know how to apply a shilling of it." Nevertheless, I do not attach such importance as some do to an increased supply of labour. What are the facts of the case? The hon. member for Bristol, whose evidence is very important, says that he is not confident in the efficacy of an increased supply of labour. The hon. member states that there are in the West Indies about a million of inhabitants, coloured and white, and that the annual produce of sugar is only 140,000 hogsheads. That statement seems to furnish conclusive proof that there is in the West Indies labour enough; the only question is, how to take advantage of the existing supply. It is proposed to stimulate the exertions of the present labourers in the West Indies by the importation of fresh labourers. It is contended that this will operate as a moral check upon idleness, and that when the present labourers find that fresh labourers are about to be introduced, they will be willing to work themselves. It surely will require the utmost tact to apply this species of moral check. It appears to me that the importation of thousands of Coolies, or of negroes from the coast of Africa, for the purpose of inducing resident labourers to work, is rather a clumsy process. Suppose you effect your object, what is the result? Can the additional labourers obtain full employment? You have added to the resident population of the colonies a number of strangers—brought thousands of miles from their homes—severed from all their natural connections—unaccustomed to the labour they are to be employed in—not because there was a real scarcity of labour—but that the immigrant might serve as a check on the idleness of others. Well, suppose the check to be effectual—suppose that by these means you succeed in inducing the resident population to work—you must have a superabundant supply of labour, and the unfortunate person you have persuaded to immigrate will be unable to obtain full employment. If you are to have immigration at all, it ought surely to be the result of private speculation. We ought, indeed, to take every precaution against abuse in conducting

that speculation. We ought to determine from what part the African coast negroes might be brought. We should ascertain what parts of the African coast are inhabited by free negroes capable of forming a judgment on the question put before them—capable of understanding the nature of a contract. The government ought to take upon itself the responsibility of entering into communication with the sovereigns or individuals at the head of tribes, explaining to them the object for which immigration to the West Indies is desired, and should also take on itself the responsibility of protecting the negroes after their departure from Africa. If, however, the government were to undertake the sole management of an extensive scheme of immigration, it appears to me that such a scheme, wanting the nice tact which accompanies individual speculation, would end in disappointment. Facilitate, if you will, the operations of individuals whose particular estates require the immigration of negroes, taking, at the same time, every precaution against abuse on the coast of Africa—against the possibility of originating a new slave trade; but this, in my opinion, should be the extent of active interference on the part of the government.

Although the sum of half a million is demanded by government, I hope they will not insist peremptorily on applying it exclusively to the purposes of immigration; but that, if they should be satisfied that there are other means by which relief may be more effectually given to the West India colonies than by immigration, they will not hesitate to apply the money, or a portion of it, in that way. It appears to me that there are modes by which relief can be more efficaciously administered than by the encouragement of immigration. The evidence respecting the immigration of the Coolies presents details most painful in respect to their condition on their arrival in the colonies, whilst it is evident that their sufferings during the voyage must have been horrible. If, then, government admit the principle of affording pecuniary aid to the West India colonies, the mode in which that relief may be most effectively supplied ought to be left fully open to consideration. Some colonies are labouring under great difficulties, owing to the want of irrigation and drainage. In others, great advantage would result from applying remedies against drought. Upon these points we have very important evidence from a British peer, and a great proprietor in Jamaica, recently returned to this country from the colonies—Lord Howard de Walden. We have also the evidence of the hon. gentleman the member for Rochester (Mr. Bernal). He complained, by the by, the other night, of the slumbers of the noble lord on the treasury bench, and is himself indulging in a nap.

“—Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.”

Lord Howard de Walden states, that there is a district between Kingston and Spanish Town where a great deal of the finest land possible could be brought into cultivation by making a cut from Springhead to the river Cabre. Three estates would be benefited by the work, which would cost £4,000. The expense of the drain which is necessary to reclaim this fertile land would be repaid in a year or two. Now, I ask the proprietors of the three estates, why, under such circumstances, do you not reclaim this magnificent district by making the drain yourselves? The answer is, “We are impoverished, and cannot make it; we must rely on the British government.” But why did you not complete so profitable a work in the times of prosperity? Because you relied on protection. Because you relied on the factitious aid of protection, you have not made those improvements which you must have made if you had been subject to the wholesome influences of competition. What other reason can be given why the proprietors of these estates should not have made a certain drain, at the expense of £4,000, which would repay the whole cost in two years? We are draining away in England, and are content to receive 4 or 5 per cent., on the outlay; and yet these West India proprietors have not drained, although there would be a return of 50 per cent. The hon. member for Rochester spoke the other night of an estate in Porto Rico, to which irrigation has been applied within the last five years with astonishing success. It appears, that the produce of the estate was in the first year, 100 hogsheds; in the second, 200; in the third, 300; in the fourth, 500; and in the following year, 1847, 900. If that can be done by taking precautions against drought—if such enormous produce can be

obtained by simple improvements on a comparatively small estate, why should we despair of our West India colonies if similar precautions against the vicissitudes of seasons were adopted in them? By such a course our colonists would be only following the example of Lombardy, the whole fertility of which depends on its system of irrigation. In making these statements in respect to the past neglect, and to the certain profit of obvious improvements, I am relying on the testimony of West India proprietors. Lord Howard de Walden says, that the construction of a certain tramway at a cost of £15,000 would benefit sixteen sugar estates. Now, I wish the government to consider whether they would not benefit the colonies more by applying a portion of the £500,000 to the encouragement of such improvements as those to which Lord Howard de Walden refers, than by stimulating immigration? I will not abandon the hope that under the influence of competition, improvements may be made which will create a demand for labour of a more healthful description than that of cane planting, and may lay the foundation of great local prosperity in various parts of the West Indies.

I come now to the last and most important consideration—the consideration whether I shall consent to give the British colonial sugar a 10s. protecting duty for six years. My hon. friend's (Sir J. Pakington's) last resolution means that if it means anything. I could not vote for that resolution without encouraging a just expectation, on the part of the West Indian body, that 10s. protecting duty, for a period of not less than six years, would be the certain practical result. All who are ready to give that amount of protecting duty are justified in voting for that resolution. After full consideration of the question, I, for one, am not prepared to vote for that protecting duty. I am not prepared to vote for it, not merely on account of the interest of the consumer, but from a conscientious conviction that it would not benefit the West Indies. Why do I say that my hon. friend's last resolution means substantially a 10s. duty? Because my hon. friend has proposed previous resolutions, indicating fully his own views and intentions. He proposed, first, that no remedy would be effectual that did not give a 10s. duty for six years. He proposed, secondly, that any remedy not being in conformity with the recommendation of the committee, would not be effectual. That recommendation was a 10s. duty for six years. It is true that my hon. friend on the night fixed for this discussion, changed his resolution into its present form. But I would ask the House what will be the natural impression of the West Indian body? Will they not say—and justly say—"Although you have changed the resolution in order to gain a few additional votes in its favour, yet you mean a 10s. duty for six years; and after you have succeeded in defeating the government plan, the least we can expect from you as the amount of protection is that recommended by the committee." I cannot consent to the proposed protection for these reasons. The West Indian body is suffering from a special and peculiar cause, namely, the deficient supply of labour. I am asked to give protection, not to the produce of the West Indies alone, but to colonial produce generally. I am asked to give 10s. protection to the produce of the East Indies and the Mauritius, in both of which British possessions there is no deficiency of labour. They are to have the same benefit as the West Indies, although they have not the same cause of complaint. What would be the consequence? You admit that a considerable time must elapse before you can increase the supply of labour in the West Indies. You will, however, apply an immediate stimulant to the production of the Mauritius and the East Indies. They have plenty of hands. There is in the valley of the Ganges some hundred thousand square miles of fertile ground with labourers at 2d. a day. The East Indies and the Mauritius are to receive, in common with the West Indies, this encouragement to increased produce, while they do not labour under the same disadvantage. Their competition will be as injurious to the West Indies, in a mere pecuniary point of view, as foreign competition. It will be two years at least before the West Indies will get an additional supply of labour, and in the interval I am inciting to competition with them that portion of the British empire which labours under no such difficulty. And what will be the result at the end of six years? I presume that you are in earnest when you propose six years as the limit of time, and that you have no lurking intention to continue the amount of protection afterwards—that it is a *bona fide* proposal of protection of 10s. for six years—that at the end of that time it will come to an abrupt termination—and that the produce of our colo-

nies will then come into unqualified competition with the whole world, whether slave-labour or free-labour. How will this affect the colonists of Cuba and the Brazils? Will they relax their efforts, when they feel assured that at the end of six years they will have unlimited access to the British market? How will this protection, so limited as to time, affect the West Indies? I rely upon the evidence of my hon. friend, the member for Leominster (Mr. Barkly.) I was not surprised by his able speech the other night. He spoke with facility and ease—with unpremeditated ability, the result of knowledge and experience. I shall cite him as a witness against a 10s. duty for six years; and what can you say in answer to his argument?—"With respect," said my hon. friend, "to the amount of protection that it would be desirable to reimpose, the opinion of my friends both at home and abroad is, that the sugar cultivation will not be maintained generally in the colonies, unless at least a protection of 10s. a cwt., to continue for a period of something like ten years, were conceded. That is what they consider, both in London and in the colonies, as their minimum. That opinion, of course, has great weight with me, as coming from men who are more extensively connected with the West Indies than myself; but I am not quite sure that such an amount of protection, for so long a period, would be for the real advantage of the West Indies, if it were imposed with the view of bringing them into competition with slave-labour at the end of that period. I do not think that it would put us in a better position at the end of that time than that we are in now. Even in the colonies of British Guiana and Trinidad, where there is abundant fertility, and plenty of virgin soil, I think there would be much danger in such an inducement to extend the sugar cultivation as that protection would afford. At the present moment, in those colonies, we are engaged in a struggle to reduce the wages, which is the only effectual means of putting the cost of production of sugar on a sound and satisfactory basis. I think the effect of a differential duty to that extent, for so long a period, would be at once to decide that struggle in favour of the negro. I think he would get his own way, and get it probably to the amount of the increased price of produce: there would be an increase of wages tantamount to the increase in the price of produce, and therefore the benefit would go into the labourer's pocket."

Now, the last man I have any sympathy with is the well-fed negro who stands out for extravagant wages; and will you adopt a proposal which will give him the victory in this unequal contest? My hon. friend went on to say—"With respect to the other colonies, I think its effects would be more disastrous in the end. I have not now been in Jamaica for more than eight years, and the accounts given to me of the state of the island, represent it to be in a much worse condition, not only than it was then, but than the rest of the West Indies—almost in a hopeless state; therefore I do not wish to damage their chance of obtaining additional protection by any thing I may say. I believe that it would be of assistance to the present proprietors of Jamaica if they got such a protection as that; but if it had the effect of increasing the production very largely, and bringing a large quantity of produce from India, the Mauritius, and other colonies, it would not permanently benefit even the island of Jamaica; it might benefit the present proprietors, who might perhaps get out of their properties with a sacrifice. My own feeling is, that there must be a protection, and for the next two years at least. Nothing less than the amount named would be sufficient to restore confidence, and to induce capitalists here to support the cultivation of the West Indies; it would be quite two years before any reduction in the cost of growing our sugar could be made by the importation of fresh labour. If sugar were raised 4s. a cwt. more, by bringing the duty up to 10s., many estates would be carried on; but I think it would be unwise to give that protection for any extended period to the colonies, if it be intended ultimately that they should compete with slave-labour."

I have, I hope, all proper sympathy with the distress of the West Indian proprietors; but the national object to be aimed at is, not to put a certain amount of money into the pockets of some few proprietors, but to lay the foundation of the future prosperity of the colonies. If we must pay to individuals a certain sum of money, for God's sake let us pay it directly. It would be a thousand times better to put the sum at once into their pockets, than by giving them protection, to raise the price of sugar to the consumer, and to stimulate a cultivation that is not likely to be

ultimately profitable. The proposition of a 10s. protecting duty for a limited period of six years is objectionable on every ground—on the ground of its immediate encouragement to the East Indies—on the ground that the struggle with the labourers in the West Indies would be decided against the planter—and on the ground that it would increase the price of sugar in the British market, while it would offer no discouragement to the cultivation of slave-grown sugar. I cannot then consent to the proposal for raising the price of sugar 4s. in the British market, for the purpose of giving temporary and delusive assistance to the British planters. The only way to benefit the West India proprietors is to reduce the cost of cultivation, and enable them permanently to enter into competition with foreign produce. I feel that by voting for the proposal of my hon. friend, I should be encouraging hopes which could not be fulfilled, and therefore I must give that proposal a direct negative. I am confident that if by means of protection we were to give a monopoly of the British market to our colonial possessions, we should not advance a single step towards securing their permanent prosperity. Take the case of distress in 1830 and 1832. What was the cause of the distress in 1830? It was over-production. There was a greater supply than the home market could take off. The report of the committee of 1832 is well worthy your attentive perusal. It appears from that report, that for many years previous to that period, there had been a gradual increase in the production of sugar; that it had increased from 4,000,000 cwt. to 5,000,000 cwt., which was more than the British market could take off; and the committee expressly say, that the only mode of effectually promoting the relief of the colonies, was to enable the British producer to undersell the foreigner in the British market. Well, at that period the colonists had a complete monopoly of the home market; there was not a single cwt. of foreign sugar brought in, and yet they were then in the greatest distress, owing to over-production. A monopoly of the home market is of little avail, unless you can exactly apportion the supply. Give a 10s. protecting duty, and you will increase the supply of sugar. If you increase the supply beyond the demand of this country, the signs of declining prosperity will soon be manifest. Look at what took place under the Corn-laws in 1822 and 1836. There was exactly the same state of things—namely, monopoly of the home market, and with that monopoly a more abundant supply than the market could take off. In each of these years a committee was appointed to consider the causes of the distress. No foreign corn had been introduced; but the European markets were not open to us, and our own was glutted. Each of the committees came to the conclusion that legislation could be of no avail. The average price of wheat was so low as 39s. 4d. a quarter in 1835. The British farmer had a complete monopoly—there was no competition from abroad—and yet there was severe agricultural distress. Again, in 1836, that distress was announced in a Speech from the Throne, and a committee of inquiry was recommended and appointed. But again no remedy was suggested, or could be devised. As with corn, so with sugar. By the factitious stimulus of protection you may unduly increase the supply, but unless you can so diminish the cost of cultivation, as to find a vent in foreign markets for the surplus which your own market does not require, you cannot prevent distress, as the consequence of abundance.

If I believed the protection proposed would ensure the permanent prosperity of the colonies, I would willingly assent to it. The case of the West Indies is so peculiar, that if by an infraction of the principles which ordinarily prevail in our legislation, we could give them effectual and permanent relief, I would consent to make the special exception in their favour. But protection is not now the remedy for their misfortunes.

Gloomy as the present is, I cannot contemplate without hope the prospect of the future. I do not despair of the West Indies being able to meet competition. Surely the man is blind to the signs of the times who can believe that the system of slavery can be permanently maintained. What is the state of slave-labour in Cuba at this moment? Lord Howard de Walden has lately made a visit to Cuba. He has seen some of the best-conditioned estates in the island. Is there any confidence there in the maintenance of slave labour? This is his account of the condition of Cuba. He is asked by the noble lord, the chairman of the committee—"Are the overseers of estates obliged to go armed?"

He answers—"Yes, I believe, invariably. The overseer had his cutlass and his



dagger, and he had three blood-hounds at his heels close by him. I understood it was the custom of the island that no white man belonging to an estate would go anywhere unarmed. They would not go on foot to any distance; but on horseback they have always their pistols besides."

In the United States, the status of slavery is still maintained. Can I believe that the inhabitants of the United States are easy and confident in the maintenance of that system? Why is it that all discussion upon this painful subject is put down? Why is it that the abolitionists of slavery are tarred and feathered? It is because its advocates have no confidence in the maintenance of this crying evil. That country cannot be blessed which maintains this cursed system of slavery. There have been incessant complaints in our own colonies for the last hundred and fifty years while slavery existed. And why? Because there was a blight over the land which sanctioned by law the relation of proprietor and slave. We do not repent of the sacrifices we made, of the magnificent resolution we evinced in the face of Europe to extinguish the system of slavery. We see indeed that there are slave-owners that prosper in the world, and are in the possession of great riches; but we do not say, "It is in vain that we have cleansed our hearts and washed our hands from the stain of this abomination." What position might we have been in at this moment if we had not taken timely precautions for the extirpation of this crying evil? Under no circumstances, at no time, can that country be secure in which this condition of slavery is permitted to continue. I trust that those governments that are still encouraging the slave-trade, and, notwithstanding their hypocritical pretences, defying every effort we make to put an end to this accursed traffic, will be wise in time, and ponder on the consequences that must ensue from an increasing slave population. Have no events occurred of late calculated to admonish them. There have been mighty convulsions in Europe. That man would have been thought a madman who six months since ventured to predict the consequences of the events at Paris. That man who had said six months ago that the contagious influence of events at Paris would involve Berlin and Vienna in anarchy and confusion, would have been thought a mad speculator on the future. The mighty heavings of those convulsions are already felt on the other side of the Atlantic. Look at what is passing in the colonies of France. There are on every side useful lessons, by which the governments of Brazil, of Cuba, and of the United States, would do well to take timely warning, to foresee that that which has happened in Europe must precipitate the time when there shall be a final extinction of slavery and the slave trade. I hope that the abolition of both will be effected by timely wisdom on the part of the governments which now tolerate them. If it be not so effected—if by wise and provident legislation they do not speedily efface those great blots on Christianity—still they cannot long endure. The slave is destined to recover his freedom. Let me borrow, to express my own convictions, the magnificent language of Curran—worthy of the aspirations which he breathed for the freedom of the slave:—"No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced—no matter in what disastrous struggle his liberties may have been cloven down—no matter what complexion incompatible with freedom an Indian or African sun may have burnt upon his brow—the time is fast approaching when his soul shall walk abroad in all her native majesty, when his body shall swell beyond the measure of the chains which burst around him, and he shall stand redeemed, regenerate, and disenthralled, by the irresistible genius of universal emancipation."

The amendment by Sir J. Pakington was negatived, and the House went into committee.

## CURRENCY.

AUGUST 22, 1848.

Mr. Herries, after a brief review of the acts relating to the currency, and more particularly with regard to the act of 1844, submitted the following motion:—"That this House will, early in the next session of parliament, take into its serious consideration the reports from the committee of this House, and from the committee of the House of Lords, communicated to this House, appointed to inquire into the

causes of the recent commercial distress, and how far it has been affected by the laws for regulating the issue of bank notes payable on demand."

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Mr. Speaker, I was quite prepared to hear my hon. friend the member for North Warwickshire take credit to himself for entire consistency on the subject of the currency; I was quite prepared to concede it to him; but I confess I was not prepared to hear him declare that he had been a disciple of Mr. Horner, and that he still adopted every principle for which Mr. Horner contended. My hon. friend says, indeed, that he differed from Mr. Horner as to his practical conclusion; but he assures us that in every word and in every letter of each of the thirteen or fourteen preliminary resolutions on the subject of the standard of value moved by Mr. Horner in 1811, he unreservedly concurs. Why, Sir, if there be any medium of communication between those who live and those who have departed from amongst us, Mr. Horner must now be shuddering in his grave at hearing the hon. member's representation that the principles of Mr. Horner were in precise accordance with his own. What must be his amazement at hearing the hon. gentleman professing to be his disciple, and at the same time contending that the circulating medium ought to represent—not gold, not silver, not capital, not anything tangible; but that which is worse than nothing—the debt of the country! Your expenditure is now £50,000,000, and to that extent my hon. friend would issue inconvertible paper. Add £10,000,000 to that expenditure, no matter whether the resources of the country can bear the additional charge, and £10,000,000 more of inconvertible paper may be, according to my hon. friend, safely and prudently issued. There need in that case be no limit to lavish expenditure—no limit to the incurring of debt; the ready means of meeting every charge are at hand—a fresh issue of inconvertible paper. My hon. friend says the amount of that paper is limited; but limited by what? It may increase with increasing expenditure: £60,000,000 of paper may be issued with as much safety as £50,000,000, provided only that the amount does not exceed the sum which is required to meet the public necessities, and that the paper, after its issue, is receivable at the exchequer in payment of taxes. The more you expend, the more paper you may issue; and as my hon. friend thinks that plenty of money is a never-failing source of prosperity, there not only is no check upon expenditure, but a direct premium upon it. Your paper issues would be inconveniently restricted by economy.

My hon. friend has another theory. He contends that any amount of circulation is safe that has for its basis the land and property of the country; and this is the doctrine of a disciple of Mr. Horner. [Mr. Spooner: I strictly limited it to the amount of your expenditure.] I thought I heard my hon. friend mention the acres of the country, and the realised capital of the country, as a perfectly safe and sufficient foundation for a corresponding amount of currency. But even with my hon. friend's explanation, his doctrine is sufficiently alarming. His inconvertible paper, limited by nothing but the extent of the public necessities, will be quite as bad as inconvertible paper issued *ad libitum* upon land and capital. The real value of such a currency will soon be correctly estimated in foreign countries, and will be sensibly felt by those who rely on the wages of labour for the means of subsistence.

But how does my hon. friend reconcile these theories with the principle laid down in Mr. Horner's resolutions? From the practical conclusion, namely, the resumption of cash payments at the end of two years, he dissented; but he says there is not a firmer friend to the principles for which Mr. Horner contended. I shall surely startle my hon. friend by reminding him of those principles. He must have forgotten the transactions of 1810. [Mr. Spooner: No!] Very well, then, I will read to my hon. friend some of the resolutions moved by Mr. Horner, to every word and letter of which he did and still does so entirely subscribe. This is the first resolution:—"That the only money which can be legally tendered in Great Britain for any sum above twelve pence in the whole, is made either of gold or silver; and the weight, standard, and denomination at which such money is authorised to pass current, is fixed, under his Majesty's prerogative, according to law."

The other resolutions establishing the leading principles in respect to the circulating medium were the following:—"7. That under the laws which constitute the established policy of this realm in regard to money, no contract or undertaking for the payment of money, stipulated to be paid in pounds sterling, or in good and lawful

money of Great Britain, can be legally satisfied in gold coin unless the coin tendered shall weigh in the proportion of  $\frac{3}{4}$  parts of 5 dwts. 8 gr. standard gold for each pound sterling; nor in silver coin, for a sum exceeding £25, unless such coin shall weigh in the proportion of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a pound troy of standard silver for each pound sterling.

"8. That the promissory notes of the Bank of England are stipulations to pay, on demand, the sum in pounds sterling respectively specified in each of the said notes.

"14. That during the continuance of the suspension of cash payments, it is the duty of the directors of the Bank of England to advert to the state of the foreign exchanges, as well as the price of bullion, with a view to regulate the amount of their issues.

"15. That the only certain and adequate security to be provided against an excess of paper currency, and for maintaining the relative value of the circulating medium of the realm, is the legal convertibility, upon demand, of all paper currency into lawful coin of the realm."

My hon. friend says, that previously to the resumption of cash payments, there had been a great depreciation of paper as compared with gold; and that in 1819, when parliament resolved to restore the standard of value, reference ought to have been had to that depreciation, and that the public creditor who had advanced his money to the State in a currency of smaller value, had no equitable right to recover the principal, or to be paid the interest of his debt, in a currency of the full value; that the pound he advanced was not the pound of twenty shillings of lawful money, but a pound of fifteen shillings, or some other such amount.

Now, it certainly would have been possible to make some arrangement of this kind—to have formed an estimate of the extent to which the depreciation of paper had been carried during the suspension of cash payments, and, on the restoration of cash payments, to have made a corresponding reduction in the value of the currency in which the then existing public engagements were to be discharged. Such an arrangement, I say, would have been possible. Whether it would have been equitable is another question. When parliament borrowed money of the public creditors during the war, they reserved no power to discharge the debt in other than the lawful coin of the realm. The suspension of cash payments was avowedly a temporary measure, continued from time to time, with a distinct announcement on the part of parliament that they should be resumed six months after the ratification of a definitive treaty of peace.

Does my hon. friend recollect the 9th resolution of Mr. Horner? Is it one of those, every word and letter of which it seems that he has approved? It is to this effect:—"9. That when it was enacted that the payment of the promissory notes of the Bank of England in cash should for a time be suspended, it was not the intention of parliament that any alteration whatever should take place in the value of such promissory notes."

My hon. friend will perhaps say, that whatever might be the legal obligation, the engagement, whether expressed or implied, was an impossible one; that the notorious fact of depreciation ought to have been recognised; and that, on the resumption of cash payments, the public creditor should have been compelled to receive the *bona fide* equivalent for that which he had lent. Now, I will take my hon. friend's own estimate of the extent of depreciation. It shall have been twenty-five per cent. if he pleases. In that case 15s. of sterling money will repay the debt of a nominal 20s. borrowed in paper during the suspension of cash payments. What would have been the effect of a monetary settlement founded on this basis? The debtor would no doubt have received a proportionate benefit; an amount of taxation less by 25 per cent. would have sufficed to pay the interest of that part of the national debt which was incurred during the period of depreciation; but all other interests would remain unaffected. You would have called 15s. by the name of 20s., and so far as the discharge of debt previously incurred is concerned, 15s. would discharge the functions of a pound; but in every other subsequent transaction, in every subsequent dealing between man and man, the intrinsic value of the silver or gold which it contained would regulate the real worth and efficiency of the new pound as an instrument of exchange. Does my hon. friend suppose that in the adjustment of

the foreign exchanges, for instance, the pound of 15s. would be counted for anything more than 15s. ? that you could buy from the foreigner more than three-fourths of the goods which you buy for the pound sterling of the present day ? Nay, in your own domestic transactions, always excepting the payment of debt incurred, there will be nothing gained. If the paper money is to be convertible into coin at the will of the holder, you may if you choose call 10s. by the name of a pound; but there will remain the same danger of excessive issue, the same risk of a monetary crisis, the same demand for timely precautions, the same necessity for contraction and for severe pressure, if those timely precautions be neglected.

It may be thought by some that these are needless comments on the doctrines of my hon. friend—that those doctrines meet with few supporters. That may be true so far as this House is concerned. In this House my hon. friend may be in a small minority; but out of this House, of those who talk about the currency, and write about the currency, the vast majority is with my hon. friend. Nine-tenths of those, out of this House, who want a change in the currency want substantially that which my hon. friend wants, namely, issues of paper without the check of convertibility.

There was a witness before the committee of the Commons whom I consider to be a fair representative of the prevailing opinions on the currency—a gentleman of the name of Salt. Mr. Salt gave his evidence with great fluency—with evident conviction of the truth of the doctrines he maintained; nor was he deficient in that quality of boldness in the avowal of his opinions, which has been ascribed to-night to the chancellor of the exchequer. Mr. Salt did not, I apprehend, seek to intrude his opinion on the committee. The report says:—"Deputations from Liverpool and Birmingham had communicated with the government during the period of difficulty; and your committee thought it best to commence their inquiry by examining certain witnesses connected with Liverpool and Birmingham." And among others Mr. Salt.

In Mr. Salt's opinion, paper money ought to be issued till you have restored prices to a remunerating level. I asked Mr. Salt whether there might not be a difficulty in determining whether prices at any given time were remunerating or not: whether the trade which was remunerating to a man possessed of capital and skill, might not be a losing trade to him who had neither one nor the other ? Mr. Salt at once solved the difficulty by answering:—"The test I would give would be when all the labourers are taken into employment." \* \* \* \* "It is necessary (he said) that the money should be maintained in the country in sufficient amount to employ all the labourers of the country."

That I might not misunderstand or misrepresent the opinions of Mr. Salt, I put these questions, and received the following answers:—"Will you state whether I correctly understood you as saying that national paper should be issued *ad libitum* till the period when prices were remunerative, and every industrious, able-bodied man found in full employment?—Certainly." "When that object had been achieved, you would fix your standard at that point?—Yes."

Now, these are not the personal opinions of Mr. Salt, but the opinions of the Birmingham school of currency. I asked Mr. Salt:—"Is there not an association in Birmingham on the subject of the currency?—Yes." "Though some individuals may differ from the views which you have expressed, are they not the general views of the association?—They are." "Did you ever hear any one dissent from them?—I think not; at any rate, those who have dissented have ceased to dissent."

Mr. Spooner: There were other questions put to Mr. Salt on that point.

Sir R. Peel: There were questions put by my hon. friend, and I will not fail to read them. My hon. friend, I know not why, seemed ashamed of Mr. Salt as the organ of the Birmingham school: he was very anxious to extort from Mr. Salt an admission that the opinions he gave were not sanctioned by that school. The House shall judge of his success:—"Mr. Spooner: Have you ever laid before a meeting of the Currency Reform Association your theory about the average value of metals forming the basis of the standard?—I have." "When was that done?—I cannot say exactly; but we have talked it over several times." "Did you ever get a vote of approbation upon it?—No."

Finding Mr. Salt thus pressed by my hon. friend, I came to his rescue with this question:—"Sir R. Peel: But did you ever find anybody successfully contend against those views?—No; I never heard anybody attempt it."

Thus ended the examination of Mr. Salt, who retired triumphant from the committee. Perhaps my hon. friend thinks that Mr. Salt, like himself, is a disciple of Mr. Horner.

I will now address myself to the question immediately under discussion, the motion of my right hon. friend (Mr. Herries). My right hon. friend says there is an intense anxiety throughout the country on the subject of his motion; he says the country will be deeply dissatisfied if it be met by the previous question. But why should the intense anxiety be relieved by the success of the original motion? My right hon. friend proposes that we should give a pledge for the next session: not a pledge to alter the law, but merely to take the subject into our serious consideration. When next session comes my right hon. friend, or any other member, can compel us to do this by a simple notice. What do we gain by any previous pledge? Now, this House, by the proceedings of the present session, has not greatly added to its reputation for the practical discharge of business. We have been more remarkable for the length of discussion than for the progress of successful legislation. Many measures introduced at the commencement of the session have been abandoned, not because they met with serious opposition, but because so much time has been spent in debate that it became physically impossible to pass them. We have arrived at the 22nd of August, and not having fulfilled our engagements for this session, my right hon. friend asks us to enter into new ones for the next, to draw a bill on the future, payable six months after date. And this is to be done to relieve the intense anxiety of the public. What will the public care for our pledges for the future? What proof have we given to the public that we share in this intense anxiety? My right hon. friend's motion stood for Tuesday last; but on counting the House thirty-five members only were present, and the motion was deferred until this night. In the course of this night the attendance was so limited that an attempt was made to count out the House, which failed because there were forty-two members who thought it worth their while to be present. What weight will be attached to resolutions for the future, passed by such numbers, and under such circumstances?

And what are the arguments by which my right hon. friend supports his own motion? He says the vast majority of the House are gone away; that serious deliberation is out of the question—nay, he indulges in metaphor, he calls the House a wounded snake dragging its slow length along. Then, being thus mutilated, had we not better creep out of public notice as quietly as we can? Why give ourselves the airs of a boa constrictor? Why enable my right hon. friend to complete his quotation by ending the song of the session with his own very "needless Alexandrine?"

I should be sorry, however, to rest my objections to the motion of my right hon. friend, merely on account of its being inopportune. When the time for discussion shall arrive, I shall defend to the utmost of my power the bill of 1844, and the restrictions which it imposes. Even now I will shortly advert to the character and extent of those restrictions, which are presumed to be so intolerably severe. The bill of 1844 permits the issue of £33,000,000 of paper without the previous deposit of a single ounce of gold, as a security for its convertibility.

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| The Bank of England may issue of bank notes.....              | £14,000,000 |
| The private and joint-stock banks of England.....             | 8,000,000   |
| The banks of Ireland.....                                     | 6,300,000   |
| The banks of Scotland.....                                    | 3,100,000   |
| Add the seven-day and other bills of the Bank of England..... | 1,000,000   |

Total £33,000,000

The whole of this amount of paper may be issued by these banks collectively without the previous deposit of a single sovereign. All that the act of 1844 requires is, that if an additional paper currency beyond the £33,000,000 be required, the excess shall be issued upon coin or bullion. Suppose that, in addition to the £33,000,000 of paper above referred to, an issue of £15,000,000 is required to conduct the monetary transactions of the country, the £15,000,000 of paper must be secured by a previous deposit of the precious metals. The total issue of paper will thus be £48,000,000, the whole payable on demand at the will of the holder, and based upon a foundation in coin, of less than one-third of the aggregate amount. Is this an intolerable restriction on the issue of paper money?

You object that the £15,000,000 of gold and silver are a dead weight, a useless and unprofitable incumbrance, for which no value is received. They are no such thing. In the first place, the notes issued as an equivalent, being the certificates that the coin is deposited, form a part of the circulation of the country. But, in the second place, look to the extent of paper credit in this country. (I am not speaking of bank-notes merely, but of all transactions resting upon credit, of promissory paper of all descriptions): look to the extent of speculation, to the manner in which business has been conducted by mercantile houses of great eminence, and then judge whether a deposit of the precious metals, intended to maintain the value of that portion of your paper credit which constitutes the currency of the country, can be deemed a useless incumbrance. I so totally differ from those who consider the necessity for making and maintaining that deposit to be the cause of undue pressure, that I contend that it is in consequence of that deposit, in consequence of the confidence which it inspires, that the issuers of paper are enabled to give an amount of accommodation which they could not otherwise give consistently with their own security. But the accommodation has not been sufficient to prevent calamitous failures and severe commercial distress. It has not; but is the act of 1844 responsible for this? What was the evidence given by Mr. Anderson and Mr. Glyn and others, thoroughly acquainted with commercial credit, and the transactions connected with it? Mr. Anderson, the manager of the Union Bank of Scotland, was asked, "Were the houses which suspended payment during 1847 and 1848 generally engaged in railway speculations?" He answers, "Yes, almost in every case more or less." Mr. Anderson said, that a considerable part of the loss sustained by the Union Bank arose from parties drawing bills, ostensibly for their business transactions, which in reality were drawn to support speculations on railway shares; he said that such bills were drawn to as great an extent as discount could be got for them, and that the practice continued until the general crash came.

Mr. Glyn, speaking of the houses connected with the East India trade and the Mauritius trade, said, "That with some few exceptions (and there were exceptions,) he was not prepared to say, those houses ought not to have failed,"—"that, so far as he was connected with any of them, there is none that ought not to have failed."

What law can be devised that shall prevent the natural consequence of extravagant speculation in railway shares, or the failure of houses which are insolvent through their own improvidence? That natural consequence is commercial distress—distress extending to houses that are solvent and not improvident—and there may be, and probably will be, no remedy for that distress, without passing through the ordeal of what is called restriction and pressure.

But the bill of 1844 has, it is said, caused a degree of pressure which would not otherwise have taken place. I believe it has; that it compelled the bank, in April, 1847, to do that which it ought to have done before April, namely, to restrict discount, and to raise the rate of interest, and that it was the salutary pressure, enforced by the bill of 1844, which prevented a degree of pressure ten times more severe, that would have been deferred only for a very short period of time.

My right hon. friend has referred to the recent reports of the committees of the two Houses. I shall not advert to that of the Commons' committee, because I cordially concurred in every word of it; but I shall impugn the report of the Lords' committee. I shall earnestly deprecate the adoption of the recommendations of that report, the ability of which I do not contest. Of that report I may say with truth, that it is drawn up by no friend of the bill of 1844. (I treat the report of course as the report of the committee which adopted it.) I do not say that it is a report prepared in a spirit of unfair hostility to the act of 1844; but it is prepared in a spirit which insures the full exposure of any defects which there may be in that act. The report, however, declares that—"Many of the provisions of that act are, in the judgment of the committee, as well as in the judgment of the great majority of the witnesses, judiciously adapted to the purposes for which they were framed."

They are judiciously adapted, according to another passage in the report—"To secure the primary object of the convertibility of the bank note."

Now, the act of 1844 contains many important provisions. There is the limitation of the issues of the Bank of England to £14,000,000 upon securities; the

separation of the two departments of banking and issue; the weekly publication of the transactions of the bank; the limitation of the issues of all other banks in England and Wales to the average amount of their issue for a preceding given period; the prohibition to establish new banks of issue in any part of the United Kingdom. It is to be regretted that the Lords' report does not specify the particular provisions of the act of 1844, which, in the opinion of the committee, "are judiciously adapted to the purpose for which they are framed."

In two instances the report recommends a modification of the act. It suggests, first, an extension of the issue of bank-notes upon silver, relatively to gold; secondly, the introduction of a discretionary relaxing power, to be intrusted to the Bank of England, but to be exercised only during the existence of a favourable foreign exchange. The first suggestion is of little comparative importance. No great advantages in my opinion would accrue from extending the power of issue upon silver; but whether the issue take place upon silver to the amount of one-fourth or one-fifth of the total amount of bullion, is in point of principle a matter of indifference.

The other suggestion, the giving a discretionary power to the bank to relax the restrictions which are imposed upon the bank, I consider most objectionable. I consider it to be at variance with experience, with reason, with the evidence of the witnesses most competent to give an opinion upon the question at issue. Why, in 1844, did you impose restrictions on the bank? Because the experience of preceding years—full knowledge of the course pursued by the bank, when the bank had unlimited authority—a deep sense of the evils which had arisen from the uncontrolled power of the bank in 1825, 1837, and 1839, convinced parliament of the necessity of subjecting the bank to peremptory restrictions. There was, in 1844, an almost unanimous impression, without which the act of that year could not have been passed, that the discretionary power of the bank had been improvidently exercised, and ought to be controlled by law.

But it is said—The law so controlling the bank has failed; it has been necessary to suspend it; the act of suspension is a condemnation of the law, and parliament must make such provision as will prevent the necessity of another unauthorised suspension. I do not deny the possibility that that which has occurred may occur again; that it is not absolutely impossible that there may again be such a combination of peculiar circumstances, that the exercise of extraordinary authority may be upon the whole a less evil than the rigid adherence to the letter of the law. But I contend that it is much wiser to leave the responsibility of such interference in the hands of the executive government, in the confidence that it will not be assumed excepting in a case of absolute necessity, than to confer by law a dispensing power upon any body of men, and to define the circumstances under which it may be exercised. In the first place, the knowledge that that dispensing power exists, and the hope that it will be exercised, will lessen the inducement which the commercial world would otherwise have to make preparation, each within his own sphere of business, for a coming period of pressure. In the second place, the giving of the dispensing power to the bank, with a limitation of its exercise to a certain state of things, namely, that of favourable foreign exchange, will alter the relation in which the executive government now stands to parliament, and will make it much more difficult for the government to assume such a responsibility as that which it lately assumed.

If the law be left unaltered, the government may fairly presume, that should an absolute necessity for its intervention arise, parliament being satisfied of the necessity, will again sanction, as it has lately sanctioned, the exercise of extraordinary authority. But if you provide a dispensing power by express enactment, commit that power to the bank, and specify the circumstances under which alone it can be exercised, the government must consider such provision in the light of a legislative declaration against the assumption of extraordinary authority, whatever may be the circumstances which may call for it.

It is no impeachment of the law, no conclusive argument for the repeal or alteration of it, that an extraordinary combination of unfavourable circumstances has compelled the suspension of it. The possible necessity for extraordinary intervention, in order to meet the danger of such an event, or to counteract the effect of widespread panic, was not unforeseen. Mr. Huskisson observed, many years since—"That by a possible combination of things, the bank might be driven to part with

its last guinea, not only without having checked the drain, but with the certainty of increasing it in proportion as their notes were diminished."

He says expressly—"That the possible cases which may call for the extraordinary intervention of power are not capable of being foreseen or defined by law."

And—"That the application of the remedy must be left to those who may be at the head of affairs, subject to their own responsibility and to the judgment of parliament."

I may, perhaps, without presumption, refer also to the letter which I wrote to the governor of the bank, at the time that the act of 1844 was under discussion, expressing similar views. I observed in that letter—"My confidence is unshaken that we are taking all the precautions which legislation can prudently take against the recurrence of a pecuniary crisis. It may occur in spite of all precautions; and if it does, and if it be necessary to assume a grave responsibility for the purpose of meeting it, I dare say men will be found willing to assume such responsibility."

A pecuniary crisis may recur; but recent events have only confirmed my previous impression that it would not be wise to attempt, by legislation, to provide a remedy. In all that is the subject of legislation, as in mechanism, and every thing connected with human contrivance, you take precautions against the dangers and evils that may arise from ordinary causes of disturbance; but it is no argument against those precautions, that some unforeseen event may disturb all your calculations, and compel the application of extraordinary remedies. Take the case of a complicated piece of machinery: you may provide a remedy for friction, or for any derangement proceeding from ordinary causes; but sudden explosion may baffle all your precautions. Commercial panic is like sudden explosion, as little amenable to any control, as difficult to be provided for by previous contrivances of human skill. Take the case of law. The presumption is that all law ought to be strictly obeyed; but circumstances so extraordinary may occur that the violation of law may be a venial, nay, a praiseworthy act. The other day, for instance, if the report of the newspapers be correct, a military officer having Mr. Smith O'Brien in his custody, brought him to a railway station, and finding a train ready to start for Limerick, desired the driver to start instantly for Dublin instead. The driver refused, telling the officer that he was not amenable to his authority. The officer produced a pistol, threatened to blow out the brains of the driver if he did not obey, and was obeyed accordingly. Now, this was a very extraordinary, but a very justifiable exercise of power. There was a suspension of the railway regulations; but it does not follow that they were unwise regulations, or that having been suspended they ought to be repealed. Neither does it follow that provision should be made for a similar contingency in future, that there should be an attempt to define by law under what circumstances military officers may countermand railway trains, and may threaten to blow out the brains of engine-drivers.

It may be in such cases as those to which I have been referring, and in cases of commercial panic also, that the remedy will be effectual, for the very reason, that it has not been provided beforehand. It not only may be better calculated to meet the exigency of the case, but the moral effect of the remedy, the effect on the minds and feelings of men, may be increased on account of the sudden assumption of an abnormal and irregular authority by those who are responsible for the public safety.

I repeat, then, that experience and reason are opposed to the suggestion in the Lords' report. How far is it supported by the testimony of those witnesses examined by the Lords' committee, who must be considered the very best authority on such a subject? The committee examined five of the directors of the bank, the governor and deputy-governor of the bank, Mr. Cotton, Mr. Norman, and Mr. Horsley Palmer. Being directors of the bank they are those whom the law controls, and they can have no prejudice in favour of restraint upon their discretion. They are also the best judges of the nature and extent of the demands which are made upon them in times of pressure to extend accommodation, and of the necessity of interposing the barrier of law against the too ready compliance with such demands. The Lords' committee profess entire confidence, not only in the integrity and good faith with which the transactions of the bank are conducted, but in the increased knowledge of the directors produced by experience and discussion. And certainly, if the judgment be formed on the evidence given before the committee by Mr. Cotton,



Mr. Norman, and the governor and deputy-governor of the bank, that expression of confidence is fully justified. It is impossible to read the evidence given by those gentlemen, and not be struck by their intelligence, acuteness, and the exhibition by them of every quality which can fit them to superintend such an institution as the Bank of England. But the evidence of each of them is decidedly adverse to the recommendation of the committee; it is in favour of maintaining the act of 1844 without the slightest alteration. The governor and deputy-governor of the bank declare that in their opinion "nothing could have worked better than it has done." Mr. Cotton thinks "that the act has conferred inestimable benefits, both upon the banking operations of the country, and also upon business." Mr. Norman "would consider any alteration in the act of 1844 highly inexpedient."

Mr. Horsley Palmer's evidence is certainly less favourable to the act of 1844, but even that evidence scarcely supports the recommendation of the committee. Mr. Horsley Palmer does not object to the principle of the act of 1844, of fixing £14,000,000 as the issues upon securities and the remainder upon bullion; but he objects to the want of power to relax that principle when the circumstances of the country will enable the bank to do so, without endangering the convertibility of the bank-note. Mr. Horsley Palmer admits at the same time "that the power of relaxation goes far to destroy the principle of the act, which renders it extremely difficult to say what should be the regulation, and when it should be acted on." Being asked "If the restrictions imposed by the act of 1844 were accompanied with a power of relaxation on the part of the bank directors, would it not be as if no restrictions existed?" he answers, "Certainly." Such are the opinions of those of the bank directors who were examined by the committee of the lords. Such also are my reasons for thinking that the recommendation of that committee, that the directors of the bank should be intrusted with a power to relax the restrictions imposed upon the bank in respect to the issue of paper money, is unsupported by evidence as well as by reason and experience.

I shall conclude with an earnest hope, that when the House shall again address itself to the consideration of this great question, with a view to some practical issue, they will bear in mind the great truths by which legislation on our monetary system should be governed—that they will bear in mind that trade is not carried on with paper money, but with capital, or with credit, of which capital is the foundation—that the arbitrary issue of paper money is no increase of the wealth of the country—that the rate of interest must vary with the value of money and the demand for it, and cannot be permanently regulated by the Bank of England—that fixity in the value of the currency, that is, of the coin, or of the note which represents coin, and a guarantee that the note shall be at all times convertible into the precious metals, are essential to the welfare of all classes, but especially of that class which is in the receipt of the wages of daily labour. Depreciate the value of your currency, and the prices of all articles of subsistence will speedily follow the change; but there will be no corresponding rise in the rate of daily wages. The two shillings or three shillings a-day will continue to be paid long after they shall have ceased to command that amount of the necessaries and comforts of life which they did command before the period of depreciation.

This House will, I trust, continue to insist upon the maintenance of the standard of value, and upon the guarantees for the instant and certain convertibility of paper into coin. Those guarantees you cannot have without restrictions upon the issue of paper. You cannot have them without pressure in the time of commercial discredit. Early pressure—pressure compelled by law—if it be not induced by prudence, so far from being the great evil which some consider it to be, may be the only preventive of great future disaster—the only certain means of maintaining entire confidence in the paper circulation of the country.

After a short discussion the motion was negatived.

### POOR LAWS (IRELAND)—RATE IN AID BILL.

MARCH 30, 1849.

Order read for resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment proposed to be made to the question—"That the bill be now read a second time;"—the amend-

ment being to leave out the word "now," and to add the words "upon this day six months."

Question again proposed, "That the word 'now,' stand part of the question."

Rising after Mr. Napier, who stated his intention of opposing the second reading—

SIR ROBERT PEEL spoke as follows: As in the course of the very able and temperate speech of the hon. and learned gentleman (a speech on which I will pass this eulogium, that it was worthy of his own high character for ability and moderation,) he has frequently done me the honour of referring to opinions expressed by me, and as I wish to take the opportunity of making some observations, rather with reference to the general social condition of Ireland, than to the particular enactments of the measure now under consideration—I cannot, perhaps, rise at a more opportune time than the present to address the House. I gave my vote for the proposal of the rate in aid, rather for the purpose of expressing an opinion that we had a fair claim to call upon Ireland for separate and independent exertion, than of pronouncing a decision in favour of the particular merits of that proposal, as compared with other proposals that might be made. I still think, notwithstanding the speech of the hon. and learned gentleman, that we have that claim on Ireland for such separate and independent exertion. My opinion is founded on more than one consideration; partly on the consideration of the great and noble exertion willingly made by this part of the empire for the relief of Ireland, and partly on the consideration that Ireland has not done her duty in respect to the repayment of her pecuniary obligations to the imperial treasury. I allude to certain advances connected with the operation of the Irish poor-law. The hon. and learned gentleman says, "that Ireland has paid all she has been asked to pay." It is because I totally differ with him on that point, that I think we have a fair claim upon Ireland, on the present occasion, for separate exertion. We asked Ireland to pay £1,300,000 which had been advanced from the imperial treasury, to enable her to build the union workhouses. Money was advanced to this part of the empire, for the same purpose. I have not heard that England declined to pay those advances, but I am afraid that Ireland, generally speaking, has repudiated the debt. The answer of the hon. and learned gentleman on this head is far from satisfactory. There was a clear pecuniary obligation, which ought to have been discharged by Ireland. I regret she has not discharged it, because the refusal operates as a discouragement to consider her case under circumstances when similar aid might be required. I voted also for the measure before the House, because I entertained a confident belief, that if Ireland willingly consented to make a separate and independent exertion, she would induce Great Britain the more readily to co-operate with her in those efforts which are indispensably necessary for her welfare. I did not give my vote for this measure, because I considered it any sufficient remedy for the evils under which Ireland labours. The House is totally mistaken, if it believes that the last £50,000, or the present £100,000, or any rate in aid which you may impose on Ireland, are measures at all commensurate with the evils that afflict that unhappy country. In many parts of the speech of the hon. and learned gentleman I concur. So far am I from being inclined to raise any prejudices on the part of Great Britain against Ireland, that I concur with him in opinion that injustice has been done to Ireland. With respect to the operation of the poor-law, I think that Ireland has made a great exertion to meet the obligations imposed on her. England ought to bear in mind that she is circumstanced, with respect to the poor-law, in a manner totally different from Ireland; that the poor-law was a new and unexpected imposition, with respect to Ireland, in 1838; and that the argument used in favour of the equity of impositions of that kind—namely, that the property was inherited or purchased subject to the pecuniary obligations which had endured for centuries—did not apply to the case of Ireland, which was called on to bear the expense of a poor-law, although all the engagements as to property had been made under another state of things. In the midst of unparalleled affliction, Ireland bore a burden last year of not less than £1,600,000 for the support of the poor. I think that a great exertion. I heard it said the other night by some hon. gentleman, "Why should we support the poor of Ireland—since, after having supported them, Ireland rebelled against the supremacy of the Crown?" I believe that charge to be utterly unfounded. Ireland did not rebel. The people of Ireland, generally speaking, did not yield to the temptations held out

to them, at a period of great excitement. We were enabled to suppress the rebellion with such comparative ease—without the loss of a single man, either of military or police, because Ireland did not rebel, and because the people of Ireland, suffering, as they were, from severe calamity, and with the example before them of revolt in many other countries, did remain, generally speaking, faithful in their allegiance to the Crown. I state this for the purpose of attempting to propitiate this part of the United Kingdom towards that unfortunate country. I speak, I own, almost overwhelmed by a sense of the calamity which Ireland has sustained—and of the fearful magnitude of the present crisis. My appeal to these more favoured portions of the empire, is an appeal, not merely on the ground of justice—not merely on the ground of the natural sympathy which we ought to feel with the miseries and sufferings of our fellow-subjects. Those appeals to justice and natural sympathy would, I am confident, if separately urged, prevail with this country; but my appeal to Great Britain is upon another ground—upon the manifest consideration of her own true interest in attempting to mitigate the affliction under which Ireland is suffering, and to find a remedy for the dreadful evils which are in prospect. With the permission of the House, I will remind them of the situation in which we stand now in entering upon this discussion. I will remind them that, in the course of last year, we found it necessary to commence the session with a Coercion bill; and to conclude it with the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. I gave my cordial support to her Majesty's government in the introduction of those measures. I believe those measures were forced upon them by a stern necessity—that all the evils of Ireland would have been aggravated if they had not been passed. I refer to the passing of them, not for the purpose of reflecting upon her Majesty's government, but for the purpose of reminding the House of the unhappy condition of that part of the United Kingdom, and of impressing upon them the conviction, that it is in vain for England to hope that by indifference or neglect, she can relieve herself from the burden, if there be no remedy for Irish distress and disorder, which will press upon her with intense force. At the moment at which I am speaking, you have not less than 30,000 of the regular army in Ireland; at the close of last year you had a force of 32,000 men. In addition to that military force, you have about 5,400 pensioners; and, in addition to these, you have a force of constabulary of 12,000 or 13,000 men, the expense of which is now borne, not by Ireland—it is not a local charge upon Ireland—it is borne by the imperial treasury. The whole of the charge for that military force, therefore—the constabulary, the pensioners, the regular army, a force of not less than 47,000 men—is borne, not locally by Ireland, but by the imperial treasury. Whatever reduction you can make in the amount of that force by the improvement of the social condition of Ireland, is a pecuniary gain to this country, if, indeed, in regard to this kind, any such consideration as that of mere pecuniary gain were worth adverting to. Now, with that amount of military force, and with these coercive laws, what is the social condition of Ireland? I presume that the statement I have here—I read it from a newspaper—is an accurate account of that which took place at the last assizes at Clonmel. It is stated—"The assizes for one division only of the county of Tipperary, and that the most quiet one (the southern,) commenced this day at 10 o'clock, before Judge Jackson; and your readers may judge of the disorganised state of the country when it is mentioned, that there are no less than 279 persons for trial, and of these 18 are charged with arson, 4 with attacking a police barrack in arms, 3 with burglary, 4 with conspiracy to murder, and 42 with treasonable practices; 14 are charged with highway robbery, 21 with the awful crime of murder, and 14 with shooting at with intent to murder. The prison, which has only 225 cells, has in it no less than 668 persons, including 20 persons already under sentence of transportation. No wonder that Judge Jackson designated the calendar as one of the most awful he had ever known. I did not hear yet if the treasonable cases will be disposed of, but the murder cases are very heavy, and several men are to be put on trial for the brutal butchery of three bailiffs in one night, merely because they were keeping some corn distrained for poor-rates."

Have I not stated enough earnestly to recommend to the consideration of this portion of the empire the social condition of Ireland, to lead us to address ourselves to the state of Ireland in that spirit of forbearance and conciliation which the hon.

and learned gentleman so powerfully and justly recommended? The portion of Ireland within which the greatest distress prevails, which chiefly comprises those unions that are generally called "the distressed unions," because they require extrinsic aid, is included mainly in the provinces of Munster and Connaught. To those provinces I wish to add the county of Donegal, because, from its geographical position, it partakes more of the character of Connaught, and of parts of Munster, than of the province to which it is immediately attached. Now, the population of Munster in 1841, when the last census was taken, was 2,396,000; the population of Connaught amounted to 1,418,000; that of Donegal to nearly 300,000. The total population of that vast tract of country, including the counties of Donegal and the district bounded by the sea, and by a line drawn from the town of Donegal to Waterford, exceeded 4,000,000 in 1841. So far, therefore, as numbers are concerned, their interests and their welfare must be objects of the deepest anxiety. Now, before I refer to the condition of Ireland as it exists at the present moment, influenced by recent causes, and mainly by the failure for four successive years of that species of food upon which the Irish people rely, I wish shortly to advert to her condition in years antecedently, when no such causes were in operation. I will revert to a period, not only before the influence of famine was felt, but a period—and I do it purposely—when Ireland was in full possession of that agricultural protection, the withdrawing of which the hon. and learned gentleman seems to think has aggravated her condition. In the full possession of this protection, what was the condition of the labourer in Ireland? and what was the condition of landed property? Till very recently, when wheat was at 60s. the quarter—the duty upon the import of foreign corn was not less than 26s. per quarter—the duty on the import of other grain was in proportion. That duty was reduced in 1842; but at the period of which I am speaking, so far as protection conferred benefit on Ireland, the law in force between 1828 and 1842 was the law by which the agricultural state of Ireland was affected. Now, before the influence of famine was felt, and before extreme protection was removed, what was the condition of—I can hardly call them the labouring poor—rather the unemployed and destitute poor of Ireland? The report of Lord Devon's commission is dated February 1, 1845. I wish to rely, not upon observations of my own, but upon the testimony of men connected with Ireland—men of the highest character—men conversant with the social condition of Ireland. That commission included the names of the Earl of Devon, Mr. Redington, Mr. Wynne, Mr. G. A. Hamilton, and Sir R. Ferguson; and it would be impossible to name gentlemen whose testimony is more entitled to consideration from their high character, and from their local knowledge. They observe, that although agricultural improvement was rapidly advancing—"We regret, however, to be obliged to add, in most parts of Ireland there seems to be by no means a corresponding advance in the condition and comforts of the labouring classes. A reference to the evidence of most of the witnesses will show that the agricultural labourer of Ireland continues to suffer the greatest privations and hardships; that he continues to depend upon casual and precarious employment for subsistence; that he is badly housed, badly fed, badly clothed, and badly paid for his labour."

In the second volume of a very useful digest of the evidence taken by the commission, there is a reference to a remarkable document, which was prepared by those who made out the census in 1841. They divide the houses of Ireland into four different classes, the fourth class consisting of "mud-cabins, with only one room;" and thereby the proportion of the inhabited houses of Ireland are of that fourth class. Now, observe, this account could have no reference to any thing posterior to the 1st of February, 1845. It is stated that "it may be assumed that the fourth class houses are generally unfit for human habitation;" and yet, it would appear, taking the best circumstanced districts in this respect, in the county of Down, 24 7-10ths per cent., or about one-fourth of the population, lived in houses of this class; whilst in Kerry the proportion is 66 7-10ths, or about two-thirds of the whole; and taking the average of the entire population of Ireland, as given by the census commissioners, we find in the rural districts about 43 per cent. of the families, and in the civic districts about 36, inhabiting houses of this fourth class. But I should wish particularly to take the proportion of such houses in the counties which principally include those distressed unions that are now depending for the

support of a great number of the inhabitants upon the pecuniary relief you afford them. I find that in Donogal, the houses of this class were 47 per cent. of the whole number; in Leitrim, 47 per cent.; in Roscommon, 47; in Sligo, 50; in Galway, 52; in Limerick, 55; in Cork, 56; in Clare, 56; in Mayo, 62; and in Kerry, 66. Such was the condition of the poorest class before Ireland was visited with that dreadful calamity, the first appearance of which was in the autumn of 1845. Now, what was the condition of Ireland with regard to landed property, and the tenure of landed property? There was laid upon the table of the House a short time since a return from the registrar's office of the court of chancery for certain years. I am now speaking of the position of the landed proprietors. I will not take the years 1845, 1846, or 1847, but I will go back to a time when there were heavy duties upon the import of foreign corn, and when Ireland was in the full enjoyment of whatever advantages protection of domestic produce could bestow. What was the condition of the landed proprietors, or at least of several estates in the nominal possession of landed proprietors? I will take the year 1844. The number of estates under the management of the court of chancery in that year was 874, their yearly rental being £748,000; the arrears, when the receivers were first appointed, were £34,500; when they had last accounted, the arrears had increased to £380,800; the law costs paid by the receivers were £17,340. Out of that yearly rental of £748,000, what do you think was the sum annually expended in improvements upon the 874 estates?—£2,572! With regard to estates under the management of the court of exchequer, I am obliged to take the aggregate of years—1844-45-46-47, because the returns for those years are given collectively, and not for separate years. The number of estates under the management of that court in those four years was 448, their yearly rental being £155,400; the arrears when the receivers were first appointed, were £61,700; when they had last accounted, the arrears were £171,800; the law costs paid by the receivers were £38,037; the amount expended in improvements was absolutely—nothing! At least, in the division appropriated to the statement of the amount expended in improvements, I find no return whatever; every other column is duly filled up, but there is a blank there. Now, are gentlemen aware what is the condition of an estate managed by the court of chancery, or the court of exchequer? [“Hear, hear!” and a laugh.] Do you know what the term “managed” means? I had—I can hardly call it good fortune—I had the misfortune to hear an account of the process of “management” from a most intelligent gentleman, given by him when a member of this House, the late Mr. Guinness. He certainly spoke with authority, for he was himself a receiver under the court of chancery; but he was not influenced by any partiality to his employer to give testimony unduly favourable. Mr. Guinness was receiver under the court for an estate in Cork and Tipperary, the rental of which exceeded £2,000 a year; it had been under his care for twenty-one years; it was partly in that county respecting which I have already given a melancholy detail of crime; in the course of the twenty-one years not one shilling had been expended to improve the condition of the tenantry. Mr. Guinness gave an account also of an estate in Mayo, of which he was the receiver. The rental was £4,500 a year; the estate had been nine years under his management, and £168 was all that had been expended to improve that estate. There was another estate in Westmeath, the annual rental of which was £10,600. That estate had been ten years under his management; he had received from it more than £100,000, and out of that sum not £600 had been expended in improvements during the whole period. But what effect did even that £600 produce? Nothing had been expended till within the last three years, in each of which there had been £200 laid out, and that paltry outlay enabled Mr. Guinness to recover £2,600 of old arrears on the estate—£600 in the first year, I think, and £1,000 in each of the other two. I have referred to the state of things before 1844, for the purpose of suggesting this inquiry—whether such a condition of landed property can be of any benefit either to the owner, the encumbrancer, or the country? It was in this state of things in Ireland—in this state of things with regard to the great mass of her population, and with regard to the condition of much of landed property, that there supervened almost the greatest calamity which in the history of mankind ever visited a country—the failure, in four successive years, of that species of subsistence on which the great mass of the people of Ireland lived..

What influence had that great calamity upon the condition of the people? The following appears to me a graphic and faithful description of the condition in which the first year of famine found the people in the west and south of Ireland:—"Clustered in villages, a plot of ground attached to their cabins, and a portion of a field hired by conacre for potatoes, as their means of living, in the best of times their existence was but a wretched one; and when the famine came, and the only root they had been accustomed to cultivate for food became a mass of rotteness, with no employment, no manufactures to fall back upon, they were left without subsistence and without resources, fit objects for the aid provided by the bounty of the empire, the charity of the benevolent, and the law now in force for the relief of the poor. Such form a numerous class of the recipients of relief."

That is a description of that portion of the poor who lived in villages. There was another class a little higher in the social scale, consisting of those who had small holdings of land, to the extent of three or four acres:—"Another class consists of those who had a small holding of land, two, three, or more acres, or who, with several others, had a small farm in joint tenancy (the rundale system), the allotments being checkered, a patch here and a patch there without a fence, a slight difference in level being made to distinguish the plots. Holding in common—so all their operations were in common—none tilled his land before his neighbour, and on certain fixed days the work of the seasons began. The tillage was of the rudest description; green crops were unknown; a crop of potatoes, then of oats, potatoes again, oats, perhaps barley, and often two or three grain crops in succession, was the course pursued, except near the towns. A cow or two and some pigs formed the stock; the potato produce fed the family, the grain paid the rent; the former was swept away by the blight, but aid by public works and the succeeding measures of relief enabled many of the poorest to struggle on for a time."

Now we come to 1848:—"Some of the potatoes which did not decay were hoarded for seed, and planted; the next failure was partial, the potatoes would grow again. Courage was acquired at the thought; and, in 1848, the most extraordinary efforts were made to put down a crop. Potato seed was sought for with avidity, and high prices paid for it. It was a last effort. In some cases the cow and every available article were sold to put a crop in the ground. Many staked their all on this cherished root, and lost—the blight came, and more withering ruin than before."

Such was the condition of a vast population. "They staked their all on the cultivation of the potato;" "the blight came, and more withering ruin than before." Now, what has been the influence of the successive failures of the potato that have taken place, combined with the operation of the poor-law, upon the landed property of Ireland? All the encumbrances existing in 1844 have been aggravated by the inability to pay rent, and also by the imposition of the poor-rate. The account of the condition of landed property in 1844 which I have read to you would but faintly depict the condition of that property at the present moment. Estates have sunk still more deeply under encumbrances caused by the arrears of rent, and also by the arrears of sums due for the support of the poor. What is the present condition of a great part of Ireland? In addition to the twenty-one unions so often referred to in this debate, there are at least ten more hovering on the brink of insolvency. The twenty-one unions, comprising an immense district and a great population, are in the financial condition which I shall presently describe: in eighteen of the twenty-one you have been obliged to supersede the local authorities. Their affairs are now administered not by the natural local functionaries interested in payment of the rate, and in checking abuse in the expenditure, but by vice-guardians, who, I believe, are discharging their duties most zealously and most faithfully. In the twenty-one unions, the aggregate expenditure for the year ending the 29th of September, 1848, was £468,101; the net amount of debt on that day, not provided for, was £123,985; there being, therefore, for that year, including the expenditure and the outstanding debts, a sum of £592,000 to be levied for the relief of the poor. How was that demand to be met? Was it possible to meet it by their own unaided efforts? I believe not; and you wisely contributed to meet it. Wisely, I say, because whatever might be the objection to such a course in principle, it was better, rather than suffer any portion of the Queen's subjects to starve, that they should be saved by an advance,

partly from private benevolence, and, when that was exhausted, from the public treasury. The rate collected was only £199,000. The amount supplied by the British Association and by the Treasury was £256,800. The funds of the British Association are, I apprehend, by this time expended. You have not now that source to rely upon, whatever be the demand; for by extrinsic aid the treasury is the only source from which that aid can come. Such is the general condition of the twenty-one unions. Allow me to refer to the state of one or two of them in detail. Take the Castlebar union. The population of this union is 61,000, and the maximum of persons who received relief in 1847 was 46,600. Here is an account of the condition of that union:—"Successive years of famine have told fearfully on the circumstances of all classes. Amongst the highest rated immediate lessors are the names of no less than nine proprietors whose estates are under the supervision of the court of chancery, and managed by receivers. The encumbrances and improvidence, perhaps, of former years, accumulating upon the difficulties of the last three seasons, appear to have rendered extrication hopeless in these cases."

Take next the Clifden union. That union presents the extraordinary fact, that whilst the net annual value of the land is £19,986, there has been land thrown up to the landlords, to the net value of £9,448, and by occupiers, without any means whatever, to the net value of £1,673; the total value of land thus thrown up being no less than £11,121 a year; three-fifths of the whole net value of the union thrown up in consequence of inability to meet the demands for poor-rate, and of unwillingness to incur future charges. A memorial to her Majesty has recently been presented from the grand jury of the county of Cork, in which it is said—"The grand jury should not conceal from the government their solemn conviction that the county is not able to pay this money; that this inability is attested by the fact that there are in this county thousands of acres of land thrown out of cultivation, and wholly waste at this moment; that two of their baronial rate collectors threw up their appointments at last assizes; and that one barony, containing 89,986 acres, is without a collector from that time to the present, it being impossible to get any one to undertake the collection, the entire barony being alleged to be waste."

Now, if these statements be true, what are our prospects for the future? Observe what is the new condition of solvent landed property with reference to insolvent, since the passing of the poor-law. Previous to the passing of the poor-law, each property, whether solvent or insolvent, stood alone. The insolvent property, however neglected and mismanaged, did not immediately affect the solvent estates in its neighbourhood. It did in its consequences visit them indirectly, through the contagion of mismanagement and misfortune; but no immediate direct pecuniary burden was thereby imposed. Now, however, under the poor-law, the solvent estate becomes responsible for the default of the insolvent estate. I am speaking to Englishmen, who are not so familiar with the details of this question as the Irish gentlemen, to whom I am obliged for the patience with which they listen to statements which to them have nothing of novelty; and I ask those who are connected with this part of the empire what they think of the coming future? Is it true, that in one barony they are unable to appoint a collector because the lands are waste? Is it true that of land to the annual value of £19,986 in one union, an amount to the extent of £11,000 has been thrown up? Is it true that there are in another union nine large properties "managed" by the court of chancery, in the condition which I have described to you, on the authority of Mr. Guinness? Why, if these statements are true, the blight of insolvency will go on extending till all the solvent estates are merged in one common ruin. Then what is the position of the poor? every acre of land thrown out of cultivation is doubly aggravating the evil. It is diminishing the means of future subsistence, and curtailing the means of employment. What will be the position of that barony of the county of Cork, which has 80,000 acres lying waste? You may, no doubt, have an abundant potato harvest in 1849. If you have, there will be an improvident reliance placed on it, and the spring of 1850 will exhibit a more determined effort to perpetuate the cultivation of that root. Every expense that can be spared will be avoided for the purpose of collecting seed and providing subsistence from the potato for 1851. In this way you may go on for a time; but after the warnings we have had for four successive years, can we have any reliance that the potato will afford anything beyond a temporary relief? My be-

lief is, that it will only perpetuate the vicious system so long followed. It may possibly for a time diminish the demands on the treasury; but I doubt if anything but future evil will be the result of a prosperous potato harvest in 1849. The truth is, we are now deliberating and acting on one of the most extraordinary crises in the history of a nation. It is absolutely necessary to consider—we shall be forced to consider—what is to be done in regard to a not distant future, unless we make up our minds to travel over again the vicious circle in which we have so long moved—unless we are prepared to trust to the potato, instead of endeavouring to bring about the gradual introduction of cereal crops as a substitute. You are now feeding thousands and tens of thousands in Ireland—I know not the exact number. You bewail the loss of protection; but you are enabled to feed them, because you have removed every impediment to the introduction of food. If that law, which in 1846 I was enabled to repeal—if even the law of diminished protection of 1842 had been now in operation, there would have been a duty of 10s. a quarter on the introduction of Indian meal. That Indian meal is the substitute for the potato by which you are now enabled to keep body and soul together, at an expense to the imperial treasury of 1d. a day for each man. [The Chancellor of the Exchequer: Hardly so much.] The great problem you have to solve is this, by what means will you provide for the substitution of a higher and more certain description of food than the potato you have hitherto relied upon? What course will you take during the long interval that must elapse before cereal substitutes can be introduced? The quantity of land that will produce potatoes sufficient to support a certain number of persons, will not support half the number if sown with grain. Greater care will be required for grain in the cultivation of the land, exhausted as it is by potato culture, and in its present state unfit for the substitution of cereal crops. If you are to substitute a cereal crop for the potato, no person holding a farm under five acres can support his family by mere agricultural labour. I see in these papers the mention of a single estate—and the case is not a rare one—on which there are 180 tenants occupying land of not more than five acres. They have grown corn enough to pay the rent, and the family has lived upon the potato; but they can do that no more. What is to be the future lot of these 180 families? They, remember, are not the most destitute. Their lot hitherto has not been that of helpless poverty. Can we resist the conclusion, that some decisive effort must be made to prevent continued reliance on such precarious food as the potato; and yet that in making that effort, we are purchasing future security—by a great increase of present suffering. To mitigate that suffering—to lay the foundation for a better state of things—measures of no common place and ordinary character are requisite. In the carrying out of these measures, Great Britain must unite with Ireland; and, as I have before observed, one of my chief reasons for voting for this rate in aid, or rather for sanctioning the principle of separate exertion on the part of Ireland, was the belief that other parts of the empire would more readily undertake their share of the inevitable future burden. It depends on the course we now take, whether that burden shall be an unprofitable one—promising no other return than the mere consolation of having rescued a given number of the destitute from absolute starvation, or whether made conducive to the introduction of a better state of things. If I offer any suggestion for the attainment of that latter object, the last thought that will enter my mind will be a wish to cause embarrassment to the government in any attempt they may make to solve the problem before them. Something surely may be done, some decisive course taken for the purpose of dealing with those distressed unions. The hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Napier) misunderstood me, if he thought that I said a mere substitution of one proprietary for another would solve the difficulty. I had no such intention. The hon. and learned gentleman did not hear the account I have been giving of the management of landed property in Ireland. If he had, he would have been convinced that it is my opinion that the condition of landed property there, especially that placed in the court of chancery and the court of exchequer, is such as to demand some vigorous efforts to relieve landed proprietors, whether new or old, from the liability to any such evil as the management of their estates by courts of equity. I feel as much convinced as any man, that no single measure will be sufficient for the purpose of redeeming Ireland; but some immediate course with regard to the superintendence and management of



those districts of Ireland which are most distressed, is, I think, imperatively required. In the greater part of those unions, you have already superseded the natural local authorities in the duty of superintendence. Eighteen of these unions are already governed by vice-guardians. I suggested, the other evening, the appointment of a commission for undertaking the general charge and superintendence of the affairs of those unions. Subsequent reflection has induced me to think that that is the best course you can now pursue. I would attempt to bring the affairs of all these unions under one general controlling authority. I would have a commission appointed by the government—having the confidence of the government—composed of men on whom they can rely—and deriving their authority from the government; being no *imperium in imperio*, but acting in concert with the government. It should be their province to apply themselves, without delay, to the condition of these unions. That commission should discharge its duties on the spot. There would be the greatest advantage if you could, as I have no doubt you could, prevail on men of high character and great experience of the management of estates in England, who are politically connected with you, and in whom both you and the country would have confidence—to devote themselves to the consideration and to the discharge of the duties that would necessarily belong to a department of that nature. If they went to Limerick and saw the state of things with their own eyes, entered into personal communication with parties on the spot, judged for themselves, and not through the intervention of others, they would be able to submit to the government measures which I have no doubt would be well deserving of your consideration. I would place under the charge of that commission all the various measures which have been suggested for the mitigation of this great calamity, in order that they might enforce some combined and concerted system. You have grants of several descriptions placed under the control of the board of works. There are grants for fisheries, for the improvement of the land by draining, and for the execution of public works. It appears to me that the application of those grants in these distressed unions should be made upon some system; that there should be entire concert between the commission which I suggest, and the vice-guardians and the board of works—not that the commission should supersede the board of works, but that the application of the grants to these different districts should be made with a view to one great object—namely, the laying of a foundation for a better state of things. The hon. and learned gentleman is wrong in supposing that the only measure contemplated by the government with which I acted in the early part of the year 1846, was the importation of food. In 1846 we proposed, and the government that succeeded us were enabled to pass into law, a bill to authorize the advance of public money to promote the improvement of land in Great Britain and Ireland by the application of drainage. No less a sum than £2,000,000 was granted for Great Britain, and £1,000,000 to Ireland, for that purpose. It appears to me that this commission should also take into consideration the policy of diminishing the pressure of distress by means of emigration. We have the greatest colonial empire on the face of the earth. In several of our colonies there is a great demand for labour. In Ireland, on the other hand, there is an excess and a superfluity of labour, continually counteracting all your exertions for her improvement. Might you not by some well-conceived measures mitigate this evil by emigration? I place less confidence, I own, in the efficacy of this course, than many. I am quite aware of the enormous expense attending it, and of the necessity of great caution in the application of such a remedy. There is, however, one answer constantly made to any proposition of this kind, which I do not consider to be entitled to all the weight that is generally given to it. It is said—“Do not call in the agency of the State in this matter; consider, there is a vast amount of voluntary emigration, and beware lest, by encouraging emigration on the part of the State, you interfere with this voluntary emigration.” I should certainly be unwilling to interfere with voluntary undertakings, at the expense and under the direction of those proprietors who feel an interest in them, and who try to relieve their estates by engaging in them. But, at the same time, before we admit the conclusive force of the argument drawn from this tendency to voluntary emigration, let us inquire who are the voluntary emigrants. Many of them are men who are taking capital away, suffering under the apprehension that the increase of the poor-rates will involve them in the common calamity under which the insolvent unions are suffering. Now, every man that

you lose from Ireland, who takes away more capital than he does paupers whom that capital would employ, is a dead loss to that country. The comfortable farmer, fearing the growing burden of this poor-law, who is possessed of £40 or £50 capital—who sells his tenant-right holding in the north, and transfers his capital to the United States or to Canada, confers no benefit on Ireland by emigration, but he is withdrawing capital which might be usefully employed in his own country. There is another class of voluntary emigrants in whose expatriation we have no right to rejoice—all that class of helpless paupers who go out in a state of weakness and disease, the consequence of starvation at home, and who inflict a positive evil on the colonies. I believe you have in many respects remedied some of the great evils attending the emigration of that class—that many useful precautions have been adopted in respect to the means of preserving health, and of securing well-built and safe passage-ships. More particularly have you done this within the last year. But a more painful account of this voluntary emigration cannot be given than that which I find in a letter of no later date than the 30th of November, 1847, bearing the signature of Mr. de Vere, which letter has been adopted as a public document by the colonial office. This is the account which Mr. de Vere gives of the voluntary emigration of the destitute. In no records of the sufferings on board a slave-ship is there anything to be found much more distressing. Mr. de Vere took his passage in the steerage of an emigrant ship, in order that he might become acquainted with the condition of the emigrants, and he remained on board nearly two months. He says—"Before the emigrant has been a week at sea, he is an altered man. How can it be otherwise? Hundreds of poor people, men, women, and children, of all ages, from the drivelling idiot of 90 to the babe just born, huddled together without light, without air, wallowing in filth, and breathing a fetid atmosphere, sick in body, dispirited in heart, the fevered patients lying between the sound, in sleeping places so narrow as almost to deny them the power of indulging, by a change of position, the natural restlessness of the disease; by their agonised ravings disturbing those around, and predisposing them, through the effects of the imagination, to imbibe the contagion; living without food or medicine, except as administered by the hand of casual charity, dying without the voice of spiritual consolation, and buried in the deep without the rites of the church. The food is generally ill-selected, and seldom sufficiently cooked, in consequence of the insufficiency and bad construction of the cooking places. The supply of water, hardly enough for cooking and drinking, does not allow washing. In many ships the filthy beds, teeming with all abominations, are never required to be brought on deck and aired; the narrow space between the sleeping berths and the piles of boxes is never washed or scraped, but breathes up a damp and fetid stench, until the day before arrival at quarantine, when all hands are required to 'scrub up,' and put on a fair face for the doctor and government inspector. No moral restraint is attempted, the voice of prayer is never heard; drunkenness, with its consequent train of ruffianly debasement, is not discouraged, because it is profitable to the captain who traffics in the grog."

Such was the account, so lately as the close of 1846, of voluntary pauper emigration! Such a system of emigration is a positive disgrace to this country, with its great colonial empire, and great colonial resources for the people. Though the removal of such a class of emigrants may bear apparent immediate advantage to the proprietors of the estates from which they are sent, yet those who send out such persons do the greatest disservice to Ireland, because on the arrival of the wretched emigrants in the United States, or Canada, they so disgust the people of those countries that they are induced to throw impediments in the way of emigration, and thus is prevented that sound and healthy emigration which might otherwise take place. Therefore, from the advantages of that voluntary emigration which you wish to encourage, you must deduct the removal of those who carry with them capital more than sufficient to support the persons they take with them; you must also deduct all those voluntary emigrants that do nothing but bring disgrace upon your system of emigration. Without, therefore, entertaining too sanguine expectations from emigration, conducted by the government, I cannot but think that having a superintending local authority acting in concert with the government, conferring personally with the proprietors of estates, capable of seeing in what part of the country there is, if I may so say, a congestion of the population—for from those parts your

emigrants ought to be drawn—I cannot, I say, help thinking that by such means you might greatly facilitate wholesome voluntary emigration. There is a great impediment to such emigration from the want of full information on the part of the people who emigrate. Just consider a poor man leaving Ireland, and seeking a new abode 2,000 or 3,000 miles from home—what comfort could we not give him by imparting to him a little information as to the country to which he is going, and perhaps by giving him some slight pecuniary aid besides? Yes, I would not deny him government aid. I think it would be politic to incur some expense for the purpose of facilitating emigration, under certain conditions. You tell us what has been done in Ireland by the noble lord the secretary of state for foreign affairs, and by other benevolent and provident landlords. You tell us that they have reduced the amount of the poor-rates on their estates by a well-regulated system of emigration, that they have thereby increased the demand for labour, and have restored prosperity and content among the people on those estates. You tell us, moreover, that large sums have been remitted from the United States and Canada by those who have emigrated, for the purpose of promoting emigration on the part of their friends and relations in Ireland. Well, Lord Palmerston might be able to do this; and, notwithstanding any difference of political opinion, I most willingly admit that the exertions which that noble lord has made to relieve his property from the misery with which it has been visited, do him very great credit. But how many gentlemen may there be in Ireland willing to make the same exertions, who, if they had assistance and advice, would gladly follow the noble lord's course? By giving that assistance and advice, you might increase this voluntary emigration, and encourage further remittances from emigrants in the United States and Canada to their friends in Ireland. This is the emigration without alloy—which might, as it appears to me, be facilitated and encouraged by such a commission as that to which I have referred. I come now to another point to which I adverted the other evening, and in regard to which I still entertain a very strong feeling. In my opinion all these measures will be ineffectual—all your measures of drainage, of local improvement, of increase of fisheries, of emigration—all will be ineffectual, unless you can cure in some way or other those monstrous evils which arise out of that condition of landed property to which I adverted the other night. If estates with a rental of £800,000, with arrears annually accumulating, are not to allow more than £2,000 to be applied to the permanent improvement of the land—if there are certain principles and forms of equity sanctioned by the court of chancery, which throw obstacles in the way of any improvement in that respect, you may feel assured that all your other exertions will be ineffectual. It would be an inestimable advantage to every insolvent nominal owner, and to every incumbrancer who is receiving nothing—it would, in short, be an advantage to everybody except the receivers under the court of chancery, and the lawyers who are dividing the proceeds of these estates amongst themselves—if by some process, consistent with the principles, not of technical but of real substantial equity, you could relieve those estates from the control of the court of chancery, and permit them to be possessed by men of capital who would embark in their cultivation with new hopes and fresh vigour. In my opinion you would do more by that act for the ultimate advancement of Ireland, than by any other that can at present be adopted. I will just contrast with the hopeless condition of some parts of Ireland—hopeless on account of the extent of encumbrances, arrears, and legal complications of all sorts—the case of a very small property, an account of which I have before me in a letter which I will read to the House. It is a letter from a very humble man, giving an account of what he has done in Ireland, although having no connections in that country, undertaking a settlement in a remote part of Ireland, and bringing capital enough for the cultivation of the land. It is written in a simple style; but it will enable you to judge what may be effected, if you will devise measures to enable persons to follow, safely and securely, the cultivation of land in Ireland. The letter is from a Lancashire man. It is dated the 23rd of March, and gives an account of an undertaking to which he had been a party on the west coast of Ireland. “He had taken on perpetuity a lease on the west coast of Ireland.”—[“Hear, hear!”]—Well I am recommending that you should give facilities to those who have capital to obtain a permanent interest in the land. He says—“He had taken on perpetuity a lease on the west coast of Ireland. He had planted four of his

sons there. To encourage habits of industry, one is buying all the stockings brought to him, to send to England; another has purchased a hooker of 25 tons, and is endeavouring to encourage fishing on the coast; another was employing upwards of 100 labourers daily last year, but on account of being heavily taxed for his improvements, turned them off, with the exception of ten or twelve." Inclosed in his letter to me is one received by him from his fourth son, dated the 16th of March, 1849. This is the account which the son gives of his proceedings in this adventure in a part of Ireland which we suppose to be so wild and savage that it is impossible to live in it with any profit or advantage. The son says—"The more I see, the more am I convinced that this country has the best prospects of any place I know of. There is every desideratum for the enjoyment of a contented and prosperous life."

He is writing this in the midst of all the misery of surrounding properties:—"I see no reason why persons should not support themselves entirely upon the produce of their land here. Of beef, mutton, pork, an almost inexhaustible supply can always be had. Flour, oatmeal, &c., should all come from off the farm. A chandler's bill should never be known, for we have already manufactured more than a winter month's supply from the slender means we had. In fact, I think that rent, groceries, with some extras for clothing, &c., should be the only expenditure of a person in this country, when once properly settled. For the yearly sum of £5, enough fuel may be obtained, even to superfluity; and, as for vegetables, any plant that comes under that denomination will flourish here with ordinary care."

Now, contrast this man's management with that of the estate yielding £10,500, and which, out of £100,000 received, had allowed only £600 towards its permanent improvement; and then I ask which is the best means of increasing agricultural prosperity? I suggested the purchase and the management of property to a certain extent by the commission to which I have alluded. Now, no man has less confidence than I have in the economy of such an undertaking on the part of a government. So far from advising this commission to enter upon the employment of unprofitable labour, I think it ought to have for its main object the reverting to the principle of the bill of 1838, which makes the workhouse the sole test of destitution in Ireland. I cannot believe that there can be any other effectual test. I have not the slightest confidence in a labour rate or any such projects. I certainly concur in the policy of encouraging local improvement where there is reproductive labour; but I have not the least confidence in making labour the test of destitution; and I believe that if all the funds of Great Britain were applied to support the destitute in Ireland, attaching labour as a condition of relief, you would do the greatest mischief to Ireland; that your test would not be effective, but that there would be such an interference with the ordinary labour market as to involve all in one common state of destitution. But the crisis is an extraordinary one. If we desire to take any valid security against the recurrence of similar misfortunes, we must solve this great problem—by what means can we substitute for the precarious supply of food on which millions have hitherto relied, the means of subsistence more certain, more capable of preservation from year to year? And, seeing what difficulties you have to encounter in effecting the substitution of a cereal crop for the potato crop, I should not be adverse to an attempt on the part of government to show what might be done by an improved method of agriculture. I am told that the lord-lieutenant has done great good by encouraging the delivery of agricultural lectures. Why not do this on a greater scale? But to revert to the practical example of an improved system of management. There are in one union 4,000 able-bodied paupers receiving gratuitous support. If I had 4,000 able-bodied men whom I must feed, and if I could employ them to open a road to an inaccessible part of the country, I think it would be better than to make them break stones, or let them do nothing. I admit, most distinctly, that there is no test you can rely upon except the workhouse test; but I am assuming that you must give temporary support to the able-bodied; and while that absolute necessity exists, I do not see the objection to the employment of those whom you must feed in reproductive labour. Some gentlemen ridicule the idea of managing estates by a government commission. But what did you do in the case of the forfeited estates after the rebellion of 1745? You appointed a commission for their management. It was a very cumbrous commission. The members consisted of a different class of persons from that which I would recommend to be employed for the

management of estates in Ireland. But the principle of that act was a wise one. Those estates were subject to heavy encumbrances. It was not a case of a simple forfeiture of estates, and the Crown taking unencumbered possession. The estates were subject to heavy mortgages and other charges. The trustees were directed to pay off the mortgages and the other burdens, and were instructed to manage the estates with a view to their improvement. The act under which this was done is the 25th of George II., chap. 41 (1752), and is entitled—"An act for annexing certain forfeited estates to the Crown inalienably, and for making satisfaction to the lawful creditors thereupon, and to establish a method of managing the same, and applying the rents and profits thereof to the better civilising and improving the Highlands of Scotland, and preventing disorders there for the future."

That act provided, first, for the satisfaction of the creditors, so far only as the value of such lands. It next empowered the commissioners to grant leases, and, where estates comprehended whole parishes, to divide the same into more parishes, and grant competent provision to the new ministers. It also authorized them to erect schools on the said estates for instructing young persons in reading and writing, and in the several branches of agriculture and manufacture, and to supply schools with the materials for agriculture and manufactures, and for the raising of flax. Now, why should not schools be established in the west of Ireland for the purpose of instructing the youth in agriculture? Why should not encouragement be given to the raising of flax in Connaught? Why despair of the ability of government, by direct interposition on a limited scale, to set the example of improved culture, and introduce new demands for labour?

But there is another question, quite separate from that of the acquisition and management of property by the commission—namely, this—Can such a commission be instrumental in promoting the transfer of property from one class of proprietors to another? I would advise no rash proceeding in this respect. I see no advantage in throwing into the market an immense quantity of property simultaneously, and thus unduly depressing its value. I would, therefore, advise the recourse to no such proceeding. But the question is, whether such a commission might not facilitate the voluntary transfer of property. Last year you admitted the principle. You passed an act for the purpose of promoting the transfer of encumbered estates. By that act you gave power to the owners of such estates to sell—you gave power to a single encumbrancer to sell, with the consent of the court of chancery—you admitted the advantage of such a system as I am now advocating; but what I greatly fear is, that the mechanism of your act was so cumbrous that it will not be able to effect your design. Since you have decided, then, upon the principle that the retention of many of those estates is of no advantage to the owners—that they are of no advantage to the encumbrancers—that they are a positive evil with respect to the solvent proprietors in their neighbourhood—that they are eminently prejudicial to the public interest—what I now recommend you to consider is, whether you ought not still further to facilitate the voluntary transfer of encumbered estates. I am convinced that if you rely upon the cumbrous process of the court of chancery, you will not give effect to your own design. I know that I am rendering myself liable to the charge of disregarding the established rights of property. I know that it may be said that unprofessional men, in their attempts to secure the advantages of the introduction of new capital, are apt to overlook the rightful claims of vested interests. But I confine myself within the limits sanctioned by the highest equity lawyers. I am speaking now, not of details, but of the principle. It was said by the present lord chancellor (Lord Cottenham)—and no judge that ever sat in the court of chancery is of higher authority in matters relating to the principles of equity—it was said by the lord chancellor, with respect to the principle of facilitating the transfer of Irish estates—"Unfortunately for Ireland, the landed property there, to a large extent, was in a situation not only detrimental to those who had an interest in the land, but also most injurious to the community at large. A very large portion of it was heavily encumbered by mortgages, charges, and other interests; so that the ostensible owner could hardly be said to have any estate in the land at all. When a man was really the owner of an estate, he had both the means and the motive for improving it; but it was impossible for a landlord whose income arising from his landed estate was intercepted by mortgages and other charges, to discharge those.

duties which a landlord should discharge. This was a most infamous state of things."

Another lord-chancellor—an Irish lord-chancellor (Lord Campbell)—speaking of the tenure of Irish property said—"Titles in Ireland were in a most deplorable condition. In Ireland the registers were exceedingly bad; and instead of clearing up titles, and making them more certain, often involved them in inextricable confusion."

Lord Langdale, master of the rolls, said—"The interference in such a case as the present is of the same sort and character as all the other legislative interferences with private property for public purposes; and because this interference is intended to secure the payment of debts, or the performance of private obligation, which would not otherwise be performed, it is not more, but somewhat less, objectionable, than the interference with private property and contract which is authorised by acts for railways, docks, or other public works."

Now, the principle which those high legal authorities contend for is, that you may without violation of equity, require that property, useless to its nominal proprietor, shall be transferred to those who can discharge the obligations which the possession of property implies. You attempted to facilitate the sale of encumbered estates in Ireland, as I have said, last session; but I very much fear that the bill then passed will not be effectual; and my fears are confirmed by what was stated at the time by the master of the rolls, who thus prophesied with respect to the bill:—"I entertain considerable doubt whether the cautious provisions provided by the Commons to prevent sales for less than their value, are not only more than are necessary to effect their object, but so stringent as to impair the efficiency of the additional process which the amendments are intended to provide. Considering the caveats, the notices (sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to serve), the valuations, the five years to elapse before a perfect and unimpeachable title can be obtained, the liabilities as for breaches of trust, and the powers given to redeem, it is manifest that the obstacles to sales under these provisions are very great. Perhaps they may, in their application, be found so great—in many cases where there is considerable complication—as to make the additional process impracticable, and to leave to him who desires to have the benefit of the act that particular mode of obtaining it which was at first provided by your lordships."

What is that benefit? Alas, to go into the court of chancery! You substituted a principle which you thought more simple, but which Lord Langdale prophesied would be so cumbrous that it would not work, and would drive the unfortunate persons who desired to have the benefit of the act to the mode originally contemplated for securing it—a suit in chancery. Well, it is not for me to speak irreverently of that benefit. I would not say a word inconsistent with respect for the court of chancery; but when the master of the rolls says that he fears the new process will be ineffectual, and that parties must in the end resort to the benefit originally contemplated, I may be allowed at least to refer to the present lord-chancellor for an account of the benefit which is likely to be derived from resort to the court over which he presides. This, then, is the lord-chancellor's account of it:—"He had been himself familiar with the practice of the court of chancery for many years past, and he well knew the great benefits which it conferred upon the public; but at the same time he would own that he would not willingly enter that court as a suitor, nor would he advise any of his friends to do so, if they could, with propriety, keep out of it."

The lord-chancellor, it appears, is quite willing to enter the court of chancery as lord-chancellor; he is quite aware of the inestimable benefit which the court confers upon the public; but it is his settled resolution never, if he can help it, to enter the court as a suitor—it is his earnest advice to his bosom friends to keep out of the court, if they have any decent pretext for doing so.

I was afraid that the hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Napier), with his legal acuteness, was going to throw some difficulties in the way of my proposed facilities for the transfer of land. But I was happy to find that he spoke like a statesman rather than a lawyer, and admitted that great benefit would accrue from increased facilities for such transfer. I know it would be easy for any lawyer to get up and demonstrate the impossibility, according to the established rules of proceeding, to afford any relief. I could not stand before them for a single instant on the ground of precedent of equity practice. But if you admit the principle that it would be for the

benefit of all parties that there should be some simple process of facilitating the transfer of estates in a hopeless state of encumbrance, why be deterred by legal difficulties and the chicaneries of a court of chancery from effecting this great object? In the case of the land improvement act, you were not afraid of the court of chancery. That is one of the best and simplest acts I ever read. I am only astonished how it ever passed through the House of Lords—I mean, that fatal objections were not urged to the summary process which it provides. By that act (the 10th and 11th of Victoria, c. 32) the treasury was enabled to advance money for the improvement of an estate, and to fix a rent-charge upon the estate for the repayment of the same. If such rent-charge were in arrear for the space of two years, the paymaster of civil services might apply for an order for the sale of all or a competent part of the lands so charged; and the court of chancery was authorized to direct the paymaster of civil services, without any further process, writ, or other proceeding, to raise by sale the amount of rent-charge due at the time of sale, and to pay the surplus to the owner, or to the accountant-general to the court of chancery, for the benefit of parties interested. It was provided that the purchaser should not be bound to see to the application of the money; and that any conveyance executed by the paymaster should be binding and conclusive, and convey all estate, right, and title. That is the way to solve a difficulty, when you have made up your mind to solve it. Why can't you apply the same rule to the arrears of poor-rate? The noble lord opposite (Lord J. Russell) seems inclined to propose that the arrears of poor-rate on defaulting estates should be remitted. I hope he will not remit them. I do not see, if there have been arrears for the poor-rate for a certain time upon the estate, why the estate should not be liable to those arrears—why power should not be given to commissioners to sell such portion of the estate as would cover the arrears, and at the same time to give the purchaser a clear simple title against all the world. By the present law the poor-rate is a prior lien on the land, and consequently you have a perfect right to require that the arrears of the rate shall not be permitted to accumulate indefinitely, but shall be provided for by the sale of a competent portion of the land on the estate. If you consent to take the course which I earnestly recommend—if you invite new capitalists to undertake the cultivation of the land—do not permit the transfer of estates from one insolvent proprietor to another: if you do you will do no good; but enable small proprietors to follow the example of the Lancashire man I mentioned—to cultivate their own vegetables—to live upon the produce of their farms, and to write home to their friends that there is no country in the world which has better prospects than Connaught. I cannot doubt that such a commission as I suggest would facilitate the amicable transfer of land—would bring parties together, and convince the present owners and creditors that there was no advantage to them in maintaining the present state of things. I believe that those who have lands to dispose of would find not only individuals, but companies, in this metropolis, disposed to follow the example of the great companies of London in the time of James I.—disposed to do so not merely from the hope of gain, but from the desire to co-operate in the improvement of Ireland. But one thing is essential—a clear indisputable title to the property. These are my suggestions—to seek the relief of the present distress by encouraging draining and improvement of the land, by opening up roads through inaccessible districts—by erecting piers for the accommodation of the fisheries—by promoting emigration, without interfering with voluntary emigration—above all, by facilitating the transfer of property from insolvent to solvent proprietors, and by abandoning the present injurious system of giving gratuitous relief, whether in exchange for labour or not, and reverting gradually to the wiser principle of the act of 1838, of applying the only effectual test—the workhouse test—as a proof of destitution. I make these suggestions, particularly as regards the transfer of property, with the utmost hesitation—being an unprofessional man. I am deeply sensible of the necessity of a remedy, and of the difficulty of providing it; but, if you are as convinced of the evil as I am, then, I trust, that you, who have the command of the best advice, will not be deterred from applying a remedy by any legal technical difficulties. I at once say that, rather than the present state of things should continue, I would see the jurisdiction of the court of chancery ousted altogether. In many preceding cases, when great difficulties were to be solved, when there was an urgent necessity for

despatch, you have appointed a special tribunal of men of high legal authority to decide according to the principles of equity, without being trammelled by technical rules and precedents. I trust we shall be aided by such men as the hon. and learned gentleman, the member for the University of Dublin (Mr. Napier), and the hon. and learned member for Newark (Mr. Stuart), who foresaw the difficulties of the bill of last session. I trust they would aid us in reconciling a summary mode of proceeding with the principles of equity.

Reject this proposal if you will, but propose some other. If you can propose a better, there is no man in this House who would give it a more cordial support than I shall. I make this proposal without adventitious party aid. I know not who agrees with or who differs from me. I make it solely under the influence of sympathy for an unfortunate country, and with the conviction that some decisive measure is necessary for the relief, not only of Ireland, but of this country. Let us remember that it is impossible to free ourselves from the connection with Ireland. I have mentioned the expense of maintaining a military force of nearly 50,000 men. I have mentioned the miserable condition of Ireland, as shown by the events of the last Tipperary assizes. Only think in what manner the destitute of Ireland affect the condition of the labouring classes here by that immigration into this country, which you can neither prevent nor control. There may be difficulties with respect to emigration to other countries, but just consider how the labouring poor here are affected by the sweepings of Ireland being poured into this country. If you could direct a useful emigration to other countries, it would immediately benefit not only Ireland but England and Scotland also. Such an incursion of poverty into this country has a tendency to reduce your population to a condition not much superior to that of those who are so added to its numbers. Recollect the position of that part of the empire to which I refer. I speak of its geographical position. Recollect that while, on the one hand, it may be the source of your strength, it may, on the other hand, be the source of great peril and weakness, in the event of war, and the hostile combinations of powerful states against this country. That great man to whose authority I referred, who offered his advice to James I., with respect to the plantation of Ulster, thus speaks of the effects which he anticipated from that measure:—"The third consequence is the great safety that is likely to grow to your Majesty's estate in general by this act; a discomfiting all hostile attempts of foreigners—which the weakness of that kingdom hath heretofore invited."

It is now above 250 years since that observation was made. The population of those great provinces, Munster and Connaught, now consists of 4,000,000 of people. Of those, 95 parts out of the 100 are Roman Catholic. Loyal subjects, I think, they have proved themselves, during the temptations to rebellion which were held out to them by men of property and influence, during a period when the severest distress at home was combined with universal excitement and successful revolt in many foreign countries. Still between you and them there exist no great natural sympathies: that connecting link which was supplied by the possession of property in the hands of great landed proprietors, is greatly weakened by the desolation which now prevails, by the condition of these landed proprietors, in consequence of the operation of the poor-law and of four successive years of famine. Lord Bacon, speaking in the reign of James I., observed, that the weakness of that kingdom has hitherto invited the hostile attempts of foreigners. We have had the happiness to be exempted from the miseries which other countries of Europe had undergone from actual invasion. But recollect that during the last century, on three different occasions, since the year 1759, the attempts of France have been directed towards that very part of the United Kingdom to the social improvement of which I am attaching so much importance. In 1759, an invasion of the west coast of Ireland, by a very formidable armament, was only defeated by the destruction of the French fleet, under the command of M. de Conflans, by Sir Edward Hawke. In 1796, a great effort was made by France to invade that part of Ireland in which one of the most distressed unions is situated. The descent on Bantry Bay was defeated by storms which dispersed the fleet of France. Again, in 1798, on the shores of another of those unions a landing was effected. The first town seized by the French after landing in the bay of Killala was the town of Ballina. The small force which then landed, consisting of not more than 1,100 men, maintained their position in Ireland for



seventeen days; and the town was in the possession of the French and rebel force for thirty-two days before they were finally expelled. I mention these facts for the purpose of reminding you that peace may not always be preserved; that you may have formidable combinations directed against you. We cannot conceal from ourselves—experience shows us—that this west coast of Ireland is the weak part of our empire. If we can by any decisive measures promote the happiness, contentment, and welfare of its inhabitants, we shall not only be promoting the internal peace, and advancing the prosperity of Ireland, but, as Lord Bacon said, we shall be taking security that the weakness of that kingdom shall not, as heretofore, invite a foreign enemy to invasion. It was observed, by that same great authority, still speaking of the social condition of Ireland—"And in the natural body of man, if there be any weak or affected part, it is enough to draw rheums or malign humours into it, to the interruption of the health of the whole body."

If those "malign humours" and "rheums," to quote that emphatic language, do continue, it will be to the interruption of the health not only of Ireland but of the whole United Kingdom. In evils which afflict the natural body, there may be the means of relief by violent remedies. If an unprofitable member offend you, you must cut it off and cast it from you. If a tree be unfruitful, and cumbereth the ground, you may cut it down. You have no such remedy for the evils that afflict the social system. You must cure the diseased part, or bear with it—though its evil influence should affect your vital energies. You have no such remedy as excision—no power to cut off and cast from you the offending member of the social body. It is in the growing conviction that its weakness will be our weakness, its disease our disease, that I see the faint hope of a decisive remedy. It has pleased God to afflict us with a great calamity—which may, perhaps, be improved into a blessing, if it awakens us to a due sense of the danger which threatens us: without this warning, we might have gone on from year to year, with little thought of the future; still trusting to one precarious root for the subsistence of millions—those millions badly and insufficiently fed in the years of abundance, and doomed to starvation in the years of dearth. Let us now profit by this solemn warning—let us deeply consider whether "out of this nettle, danger, we may not pluck the flower, safety"—and convert a grievous affliction into a means of future improvement and a source of future security.

On a division the numbers were: Ayes, 193; Noes, 138; majority 55. Bill read a second time, and committed for Thursday, April 19.

## STATE OF THE NATION.

JULY 6, 1849.

In the adjourned debate on Mr. Disraeli's motion—"That this House do resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, to take into consideration the state of the nation,"—

SIR ROBERT PEEL said: Sir, I do not propose to enter at any length, if indeed at all, into those considerations of a purely political character, which are naturally raised by the question brought forward by the hon. member for Buckinghamshire. It would be totally out of my power to do justice to those considerations during the period for which I could fairly expect that the House would lend me its attention. To discuss the question of Ireland—the colonial policy—the foreign policy of this country, in one speech, must, if any attempt were made to do justice to those various topics, absorb so much of the time of the House, that little would be left for the discussion of that which I consider to be the main point at issue this night, namely, shall we displace the government, for the purpose of subverting the commercial policy on which it has acted?

Since the accession of the present ministry to power, I have felt it to be my duty to give to the great majority of the measures they have introduced a general support. I have thought it but just to make allowance for the great difficulties with which they have had to contend—commercial discredit and distress—famine in Ireland—the greatest moral and social revolution, by which the internal tranquillity of nations or the peace of Europe was ever disturbed. I have thought that it was for the pub-

lic interest, that the energy and power of the executive government of this country, during such a crisis of combined dangers, should not be impaired by factious or captious opposition. At the same time, Sir, I wish it to be distinctly understood, that all I mean to imply by the vote I shall give to-night is this—that I cordially approve of the general principles of commercial policy by which her Majesty's government have been guided, and that I will not consent to a motion, the main object of which avowedly is, to censure them for their adherence to those principles, and to substitute in the place of that policy some other economic system.

The course I propose to pursue, with the permission of the House, is this—to examine the grounds upon which the hon. member for Buckinghamshire has impeached the commercial policy which has been acted upon for some years. I shall then proceed to consider whether or no that new principle of economic policy which he proposes to substitute in its place, has any foundation in reason or experience, and whether the adoption of it would contribute to the welfare and prosperity of this country.

In examining the arguments of the hon. member for Buckinghamshire, I shall take that course which appears to me by far the most likely to conduce to the ascertaining of truth—namely, to state each argument separately, as nearly as I can in the words in which it was conveyed, and then to give the answer to such argument. And I cannot help thinking that if that were the course generally pursued in this House in the conduct of discussions like these, substituting the plain simple test of argument for vague declamation, it would conduce to the full elucidation of the matters with which we have to deal.

Sir, I understood the hon. member for Buckinghamshire to impeach the commercial policy which has been acted upon for some time past, and to attribute to that policy a great part of the suffering under which it is admitted, that some interests in this country, or in portions of this country, are now labouring. But I was struck, I confess, by an admission of the hon. gentleman at the commencement of his speech. I willingly pay to him the acknowledgments which are justly due for that admission. He was describing the state of this country when the noble lord succeeded to power, and he made this admission with respect to its condition, and the moral influence of that government, which was in power at the commencement of the year 1846. He said, that Europe generally was enjoying profound tranquillity; that there was great confidence reposed by foreign powers in her Majesty's ministers; that if misunderstandings arose, there was a ready reference to the authority of the British government, and a willing acquiescence in the advice which it offered for the adjustment of those misunderstandings. The hon. gentleman said, moreover, that Ireland was in a state of comparative prosperity, and that the agricultural interest was contented, and looking forward with hope to the future. He said, also, that the greatest export trade that this country had ever carried on was carried on in the course of the year 1845, and that her Majesty's present government, on succeeding to power, found a surplus of some £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 in the exchequer. Well, if that was the state of this country; if all interests were so prosperous; but, above all, if such was the condition of our finances, and of our export trade, I ask this question—What had been the principles of financial and commercial policy adopted for some years previously to that time?

I find that, in the year 1841, there was a deficit of income of about £2,500,000. I find that in the preceding year, 1840, you had adopted the system of imposing additional duties upon imports; you had imposed five per cent. in addition to all the then existing duties, upon the import of raw material, upon articles of food, upon every thing that constituted the import trade of the country. That addition, so placed upon imports, had produced no corresponding augmentation of the revenue, but directly the reverse. In the case of additions to the assessed taxes—of additions to direct taxation—the anticipations of the chancellor of the exchequer had been realised; while in the instance of additions to customs duties upon imports, his anticipations had been wholly disappointed. The five per cent. of nominal addition to import duties, had produced no five per cent. of additional revenue. In 1842, you adopted a different principle. You imposed an income-tax, and you reduced taxation upon all the great articles of subsistence. You reduced taxation upon raw materials of your manufactures, and upon the food of the people. In 1842, you

found prohibition upon the import of every animal which constitutes food. You found prohibition upon meat, high protection upon corn, heavy duties upon many articles constituting the raw material on which labour could be employed. You adopted a different system. You imposed an income-tax, by which £5,000,000 was raised. You removed the prohibitions upon the import of animals and meat—you reduced the duties upon every article which enters into the subsistence of the people—you greatly reduced the protective duties upon corn—you reduced the duties upon 555 articles of import from abroad. The result was that condition of public affairs which the hon. gentleman has represented to have been the happy lot of this country in 1846. Observe, agriculturists looking forward with hope, Ireland in a state of comparative prosperity, the greatest export trade that was ever known; all this was, I will not say the result of, but at least coincident with, the reformation of your financial and commercial system.

But then, says the hon. gentleman—"In 1846, you adopted a totally new principle, and from the introduction of that new principle have resulted the evil consequences which we now deplore."

Now, my answer upon that point is this—In 1846, we adopted no new commercial principle; we merely carried further the commercial principle which had been adopted and acted upon in 1842, and in successive years. [Marks of dissent.] It is more respectful to the hon. member for Buckinghamshire to submit his arguments and doctrines to the test of reason, than to adopt any other course; and I am attempting to conduct the argument precisely in the manner in which I should conduct a purely scientific controversy into which party feeling did not enter. But I adhere to my statement, that in 1846 no new principle was introduced; and I give the hon. gentleman the fullest opportunity of answering my arguments. What new principle was introduced in 1846, that had not been sanctioned during the period between the commencement of 1842 and the close of 1845? Before the end of 1845, the duties upon cotton and upon sheep's wool had been repealed. In 1842, the reduction of duties upon articles of import, amounted to £1,092,000; in 1843, to £411,000; in 1844, to £458,000; and in 1845, to £451,000; the total amount of this reduction of taxation to the end of 1845 being £6,582,000, without any equivalent concessions by foreign countries. The articles upon which that reduction mainly took place, were either raw materials, articles of food, or articles of general consumption, like coffee and sugar. What new principle of commercial legislation, then, was introduced in 1846? The amount of duties remitted in 1846, was £1,151,000, the amount remitted in the four preceding years having been £6,582,000. The articles which in 1846 were selected for reduced taxation were these—tallow, timber (being an additional reduction thereon), brandy, soap, linseed cake, rape cake, and many other articles, the introduction of which is important to the agricultural interest. There was, indeed, provision made for the ultimate repeal of the corn-law; but that is the single instance in respect to which you can justly contend that any principle of legislation was adopted in 1846 which had not previously been acted upon in 1842, 1843, 1844, and 1845. And now observe, with respect to the repeal of the corn-law: that repeal, so far as the act of 1846 was concerned, did not take place until the 1st of February, 1849. It was from sheer necessity that in 1847 you suspended the duties. The hon. member for Dorsetshire seconded the motion for their suspension. But during nearly the whole of 1848, you levied a duty of 8s. or 10s. on foreign corn, and, consequently, if there have ensued any evil effects from the repeal of the corn-law, you cannot date them from an earlier period than the 1st of February, 1849. Protection, excepting for the interval for which you voluntarily abandoned it from the fear of scarcity, lasted up to the 1st of February, 1849.

Still there are many who maintain that it is the new tariff which has caused the commercial depression, and that the principles of free trade, adopted in 1846 and the preceding years, have created or aggravated the distress under which the country is suffering. Now, it is my firm conviction, that the principles embodied in that tariff, have not caused any one of the evils which have been endured; but that, on the contrary, the principles involved in that tariff have greatly mitigated those evils. Let us analyse this tariff. I challenge you to show me in what particular it is possible that free trade can have caused the distress of the country. Let

us compare the official value of the imports into Great Britain in 1848, with the same value in 1846. In the latter year, the official value of the imports was £73,000,000; the official value in 1848 was £89,000,000. Some contended that it is the amount of imports, there being, according to them, no corresponding amount of exports, which has caused the depression of industry in this country. Let us, then, analyse these imports, and consider the several articles of import of which this tariff consists. I divide it into three great branches. First, I take the articles of consumption—the food, the luxuries—the articles which the people eat and drink; I next take the raw materials of manufacture; and, lastly, the foreign manufactured goods. It is contended, that the amount of these manufactured goods, which under the operation of free trade have been imported into this country, has interfered with domestic industry, and caused many laborious and industrious persons to lose their means of employment. Let us divide the imports of 1848, amounting in value to £89,000,000, into the three heads I have referred to—namely, articles of consumption, raw materials, and manufactured goods. The amount in official value of the articles of consumption imported, was not less than £32,500,000. Will any man tell me that he grudges the import of one single pound weight of those articles of consumption? What has become of them? They have been imported, they have been paid for, and they have been eaten. Can you deny any one of these three propositions, that the articles in question have been imported, paid for, and consumed? And how paid for? I suppose I shall be told, they have been paid for by the transmission of gold. It had been argued that if you permit these free imports, the foreigner will not take our manufactured goods in return, but will insist on payment in gold; that consequently the currency will be disturbed, and the reserve in the bank will be exhausted. There will be imports, it is true; but as a necessary consequence of extravagant imports, a constant exportation of gold to pay for them, and a corresponding appreciation of the currency. If this be so, how happens it that, concurrently with the great increase of imports, there has been, at the same time, no diminution of gold? nay, that there has been, in consequence of the state of these exchanges, an accumulation, an increase of gold? In the autumn of 1847, the bank had a reserve of not less than ten millions of gold. The official value of your imports increased from seventy-eight millions in 1846, to eighty-nine millions in 1848, and yet the stock of gold in the bank has not been diminished; on the contrary, it has increased from ten to fifteen millions. So much for the threatened exhaustion of your gold.

But what has become of the imported articles of consumption? Who have consumed this £32,500,000 worth of eatable and drinkable materials? Has any one had too much? Has there been any case of surfeit? Is the cholera attributable to that consumption, or has any other disease or suffering been entailed in consequence of this import of food? I believe not; but, on the contrary, that the whole of these imports and the consumption of them have contributed to the material comfort of the people, and that it would have been a public misfortune if this amount of £32,000,000 of imports had been by any process reduced to £22,000,000 or £25,000,000, or any smaller sum. I believe that the import of these commodities, being articles of subsistence, has not only contributed directly to the material comfort of those who consumed them, but has also encouraged their labour, because they have been paid for by the proceeds of labour.

So much for the articles of consumption; I come now to the articles of raw material. The leading principle of every tariff with which I was connected, was the diminution of the duties on raw materials. Is it possible to contend that you have diminished the encouragement to domestic industry by having reduced the cost of the articles used in our manufactures? Is it possible to contend that the reduction of the duty on articles used in dyeing, on furniture woods on madder, indigo, and on all those raw materials required for our manufactures, can have any other effect than that of diminishing the cost of the manufactured article here, and of enabling the manufactured goods of this country to compete with greater advantage with articles of foreign manufacture? Is it possible to contend that such a measure has interfered injuriously with the domestic industry of this country?

I have now spoken of the articles of food imported, and of the articles of raw

material. Let us now take the third branch into which I divided the table of imports—the foreign goods partly or wholly manufactured. It is said that it is the import of these foreign manufactured goods which has caused the distress of the country. Now, how stands the case? Here is this great commercial country interfering with the domestic industry of every country on the face of the globe, by the exports of its manufactures. If this be interference—if it be not a positive addition to the comfort and happiness of those communities with which we deal, where is the delinquent so enormous as Great Britain? In 1848, you exported in official value about £133,000,000, the produce of your industry; and you imported foreign manufactured goods to the amount in declared value of about £4,722,000 worth. Is such an amount sufficient to account for the distress? Your imports, in 1848, of raw materials to be fabricated by your industry amounted in value to £48,400,000, and the manufactured goods imported amounted to £4,700,000. But is that £4,700,000 the amount which was taken for home consumption, and which could by any possibility interfere with your domestic industry? No. Deduct from that amount all that you re-exported. Of cotton goods from India and Europe you imported in value £512,000; but you re-exported a very considerable portion of that quantity so imported—no less than £275,000. Therefore, deduct from the £512,000 worth imported, the £275,000 worth re-exported. Could there be a greater proof of the benefit of free trade than this, that it enables this country to become the entrepôt for the goods of other nations, inviting those goods to these shores, giving to them the advantage of our warehousing system, causing them to be deposited here for re-exportation? Thus was employment found for British shipping and British capital, in conducting a foreign carrying trade, without the possibility of interfering in any shape with your domestic industry. You refer to the great import of foreign silks. That import has taken place, not so much on account of the natural operations of trade, as on account of the troubled state of France, and the desire which the French manufacturer had of realising the value of whatever could be sold. But of the foreign silk goods imported, you exported to the value of £870,000; and when you estimate the extent to which the domestic manufacture was interfered with by the import, then allowance must be made for the whole amount re-exported.

But another and still further deduction you must make. You must deduct from the amount of the legitimate imports all that would have been imported by smuggling, if you had chosen to retain high duties of 40 or 50 per cent. No doubt in such case the apparent amount of imports might have been greatly reduced, and the manufacturer in this country might have consoled himself with the thought that at any rate but one-fifth or one-sixth of the amount of the present imports had entered. No idea could be more delusive. The smuggler would have corrected the absurdity of your commercial system, and would have pocketed the gain to the revenue which the exchequer has derived from facilitating commercial intercourse. Take the articles with respect to which there has been great complaint, such as watches, leather, gloves, embroidery, and needlework. Do you think that, with a restored duty of 40 or 50 per cent., there would be a corresponding protection to domestic industry? No such thing. There would be a loss to the revenue, but not increased protection to domestic industry. There was a commission appointed in 1844, which was presided over by my lamented friend, whose loss all who knew him, either personally or by character, must deplore, the late Lord Granville Somerset. It was a commission of inquiry respecting certain frauds in the customs. They reported that they were disposed to admit that the annual loss of revenue which occurred bore some approximation to one-half the amount of duty levied; that, with respect to lace, they were assured that more than one-half the quantity imported was introduced without payment of duty; and that the proceedings which had taken place in the courts of law showed the almost unlimited amount of fraud committed in respect to the article of gloves. They expressed serious apprehensions that extensive frauds were not confined to the articles above-named. With such evidence before us, what is the prudent course to pursue? Is it to continue the duty to such an amount as would have the effect of handing over to the smuggler half the revenue which ought to be derived from gloves, and to permit lace and embroidery to be sent into this country under encouragements to fraud, which no vigilance can control; or is it not the wiser plan to facilitate the legal import by lowering the duties, thus enabling

the manufacturer here to know at any rate the nature and extent of the evil he has to contend with?

Let us take the case of the import of foreign manufactured goods in brass, copper, and cutlery. I have not forgotten the speech of the hon. member for Birmingham, in which he described the state of Birmingham to be such that the Birmingham manufacturers in brass, copper, cutlery, and buttons, could not find a sale for their articles; that their trade was greatly depressed; and that the quantity of German and other foreign cutlery and buttons imported interfered with home productions even in the Birmingham market. Is it not marvellous that the Birmingham manufacturer should be beaten in Birmingham by the foreigner, when he can beat the foreigner in all the other markets of the world? ["Hear, hear!" Mr. Muntz; No.] Being aware of the deep interest which the hon. member takes in all that concerns Birmingham, and of his general knowledge of the manufactures of that town, I was startled by his declaration, which elicited much cheering from the friends of protection. I said to an hon. friend of mine—"Let us know the truth; let us have an account of all the metallic manufactures brought into this country from abroad; and in the same return, a statement of the amount of manufactured articles precisely of the same kind sent out of this country for the supply of foreign markets; we shall then know what is the foundation for the assertion that the Birmingham cutlers, and button makers cannot sell their own goods in their own town."

Well, the return which was thus moved for, includes brass, copper, zinc manufactures, buttons, lacquered goods, and so forth. It gives the amount of all these articles imported from abroad. If you tell me that this is not a faithful account of the whole amount of imports—that a great many other articles are smuggled in, pay no duty, and do not appear in this return, my answer is—then let us reduce the duty again. That assertion constitutes anything but an impeachment of the reduction of the duty. The legitimate conclusion is that the duty retained is still too high. If, on the other hand, you admit that the duty is so low that there is no smuggling, but that this return contains a true account of the imports of the articles I have referred to, then let us compare the import of these foreign manufactured goods for the last three years with the amount which we sent to other countries. In 1846, 1847, and 1848, the aggregate average amount of all these imports into England, from Germany and every other country, was worth £102,000, or £34,000 a year on the average of the last three years. Now, if we had exported only some such amount, that might constitute a presumption that our manufacture was depressed and interfered with, and that it was impossible for us to contend with foreign rivals in neutral markets. But in the same three years in which we imported this £102,000 worth of metal goods, we exported annually to the amount of £4,400,000 worth of exactly the same articles; the total aggregate amount of the imports in the three years being £102,000 worth, and the total aggregate amount of the exports for the three years was £13,372,000. The average of exports was £4,420,000 worth a year. The average of imports, £34,000 per annum. Now, what must these foreigners, who have not half our capital, or half our skill, or half our natural advantages for these productions of industry—what must they think of us when we denounce them as interlopers, interfering with our domestic industry, inasmuch as they send here some £34,000 worth of metal goods in the year, while we feel no scruple, at the same time, in interfering with their domestic industry by sending them £4,400,000 worth? What a grasping, selfish, exacting people we must seem to them! I ask, then, how is it possible that the changes made in the tariff either in 1842, 1845, or 1846—that the free import of raw materials, or such an import of manufactured goods as I have described—can be justly made responsible for the manufacturing distress of this country?

I proceed to consider the second ground on which the hon. gentleman impeached our commercial policy. I think he said that the average official value of all exports in 1845 and 1846 was £133,000,000, and that the average declared value in those two years was £59,500,000; that in 1848 the official value, which signified quantity, did not fall very far short of the official value in 1845 and 1846, but that the declared value in 1848 fell short by £6,500,000, amounting only to £53,000,000. The hon. gentleman drew this conclusion, that the working classes had received £6,500,000 less in 1848 than they did before. The hon. gentleman also instituted a comparison

between four months of 1849 and four months of 1848. He said that there is a depreciation in cotton goods exported, comparing 1849 with 1848, to the amount of £646,000; and he added, that consequently the English workman has been obliged to receive for his labour £646,000 less than in last year. I totally deny the inference which the hon. member drew from that circumstance. I deny, because there was a falling-off in the declared value of exports in 1848 as compared with the average declared value of those of 1845 and 1846, to the extent of £6,500,000, that therefore the working classes received in 1848, £6,500,000 less for their labour than they obtained in 1845-6. It would be melancholy indeed if that were the case; but my consolation is, that nothing of the kind has taken place. First, let me observe, that nothing can be more unsafe than any inference drawn from the returns which give the declared value of manufactures exported. Owing to the manner in which the accounts of imports and exports are prepared, arguments drawn from that source must be exceedingly fallacious. Take the case of the cotton manufactures; the official value is drawn from the aggregate quantity of the goods exported, without any reference to that most important element of value, quality. But if you argue that because the declared value of manufactures exported at one period is below that of another period, therefore we have sustained a corresponding loss, I will prove to you that this country ought long since to have been utterly ruined. It would, indeed, be a wonderful circumstance if, with the progressive improvements in machinery, and with a reduction of the price of not cotton alone, but of all the raw materials which enter into manufactures, there had not been a corresponding falling-off in the declared value of manufactured articles. The hon. member for Buckinghamshire was not in parliament at an earlier period, when a controversy raged with respect to this very question. The hon. member said, if I recollect aright, towards the close of his very able speech the other night—*Nunc quidem novo quodam morbo civitas moritur*. Now, I want to show that this is an old disease; and I undertake to prove that it has, at former periods, afflicted the country under a much more aggravated form than it does at present. The doctrine which infested the late Alderman Waithman during his whole life, and which he carried with him to his grave, was this—that there had been a vast diminution in the declared value, as compared with the quantities, of articles exported, and that the country, therefore, was rapidly consuming its own strength, and approaching utter extinction. The hon. member for Buckinghamshire would have been surprised at hearing how eloquent Alderman Waithman could be upon this point. This was the substance of the worthy alderman's argument in his own words. He said—"That the government forgot that every branch of our trade was founded on prohibition—that the country was struggling with dreadful difficulties—that 3,000,000 quarters of corn, and £2,000,000 worth of silk manufactures, had been imported into this country; and although it was argued that the money paid for all this would come back, he could tell the House it was no such thing; for that whatever we might import, our exports would not increase in consequence—that in the course of the last twelve years preceding that in which he spoke, we had lost £120,000,000 by our export trade."

He proved all this by the paper which I now hold in my hand. This shows how much more aggravated the disorder was in those days; and be it remembered that that fatal decline took place in the time of ample protection to domestic industry. Alderman Waithman took the exports from 1814 to 1828, with their official and their declared or real value, and divided them into two periods, one from 1814 to 1820, and the other from 1820 to 1828. He showed, that in the first period the excess of real over official value, was £41,521,000; that from 1820 the real value, as compared with the official, began to decline; and that in the second period, namely, from 1820 to 1828, the total excess of official over real value, was £83,243,000. Thence he inferred that there was a depreciation in the value of articles exported, amounting, on the whole period of fourteen years, to the sum of £124,698,000. He said that the yearly real value of exports from 1814 to 1820, was £45,262,000, and from 1820 to 1828, £36,462,000. He thus made the annual decrease amount to £8,800,000, to which he added a decrease of colonial and foreign produce, £4,524,000, making, together, £13,325,000. Finally, the worthy alderman made out that there was a depreciation in the value of exports to the extent of

£28,000,000 on £48,000,000, or 60 per cent.; and then he prophesied, as doubtless he would have been justified in doing if his theory had been correct, that we could not continue in that course without being overwhelmed by bankruptcy and ruin. Ought not this to suggest to the mind of the hon. member for Buckinghamshire the possibility of his being wrong in the deduction which he has drawn from the falling-off in the declared value of exports? Having diminished the cost, not only of cotton, but of oil, and everything which enters into the composition of manufactures, it is the natural result that there should be a diminished cost of production; but it does not follow that therefore there must be a reduction in the amount of wages paid. It is a totally erroneous conclusion, because the declared value of exports happens to be £646,000 less at one period than another, therefore the workmen employed in manufacturing the exported articles have received £646,000 less wages at one time than another. [Here Mr. Disraeli made an observation.] The hon. member's words were—"The cotton goods exported in 1849 were £646,000 less in declared value than the same quantity of goods exported in 1848, and, therefore, the English workman had received £646,000 less for his labour."

That is what I understood the hon. member to state; and I contend, in reply, that it is erroneous to infer that because there has been a diminution in the declared value of exports, the labourers who produce the articles exported suffer any loss.

I will give another proof of the fallacy of conclusions drawn from the declared value of manufactures exported. In 1815, the number of yards of wove cotton manufactures exported from this country was 252,000,000, and the declared value of the same, £18,158,000. In 1845, the quantity of wove cotton manufactures exported was 1,091,000,000 yards, and the declared value, £18,009,000. Thus it would seem that 100 pieces of calico cost 18s. in 1815, and that 400 pieces cost no more in 1845. This circumstance alone is sufficient to show how unsafe it is to argue from these accounts of declared values.

The hon. member for Buckinghamshire contends that the loss which he assumes to be exhibited in the falling-off in the declared value of exported produce, has fallen mainly on the labourer, and he drew from that circumstance melancholy inferences with respect to the future condition of the country. Being desirous of meeting his arguments fairly and dispassionately, I will, as far as possible, comply with his suggestion, that in the course of this discussion we should refer only to official documents. It is, however, impossible to adhere strictly to that rule when the question turns on the present demand for labour, and the present condition of the labourer. Like the chancellor of the exchequer, I must be permitted to refer, upon this point, to the most recent information which I have received, and on the credibility of which I can fully rely. By far the most important part of the question is the condition and prospects of those who earn their daily subsistence by labour. From the accounts I have received on this subject, I will select those which have reached me from three manufacturing towns in different parts of the kingdom—from Chippenham, representing the manufacturing interests of the West of England; from Nottingham, representing the central part of England; and Dundee, representing Scotland. The letter from Chippenham, dated the 30th of June, is as follows:—

"CHIPPENHAM, June 30.

"My dear Sir—My statement to you this morning, I find, in reference to our books, to be correct. In the six months ending this day we have paid to the same number of people 25 per cent. more wages than in the corresponding period of 1847, and fully 20 per cent. more than in 1848; and I believe the people in this place generally are better fed, better clothed, and in every way more comfortable than they have been for years. The general trade of the town is in a very flourishing state; poor-rates about 3s. 4d. in the pound; the number of people in the union workhouse, 97. The West of England cloth trade is unquestionably better than it has been for years. I have reason to know that in the town of Trowbridge, more goods have been made and sold in the last six or nine months, and a larger amount of wages paid to the people, than were ever before known; and this, I believe, is the case in the whole clothing district of the West of England; the parliamentary returns of the consumption of cotton and wool prove it to be the same both in Yorkshire and Lancashire."



In the West of England, and other parts of the clothing district, there is indeed one cause of complaint. The manufacturers cannot get a sufficient quantity of foreign wool. When we reduced the duty on foreign wool, it was foretold that the measure would interfere with domestic produce, and reduce the value of the wool grown at home. So far from that being the case, the manufacturers are now crying out for more foreign wool; and the more foreign wool they obtain, the better is the demand for our own wool, in order that it may be worked up with the foreign. A letter from Nottingham is in these terms:—

“NOTTINGHAM, June 11.

“In the hosiery trade, both at Leicester and Nottingham, an advance of wages has taken place, and a second advance is now demanded by the workmen; and, at the present time, I should suppose, that about one-fourth of the hands have now struck work in Nottingham for a second advance. In my experience, I have never found workmen turning out for an advance of wages but in times when they were comparatively in tolerable or better circumstances, and they have had full work now since May, 1848, and the price of bread and meat, as well as clothing, so cheap, that for many years past the operatives have not been so well off. I have no mills working short time, but all fully employed. The silk factories, who spin silk for the lace trade, cannot supply the present demand; the lace trade is much improved, particularly in black silk lace and black silk shawls.”

The letter from Dundee said—

“DUNDEE, June 11.

“In reply to your letter of the 9th instant, I beg to state, that at no period, for several years past, have the mills, in my district, been so actively or fully employed as at present. I have every reason to believe, that trade is healthy and flourishing; and it is the general opinion, that there is a good prospect of a continuance of this state of matters for some time to come. There is, consequently, great demand for labour, not only in the mills, but in all the occupations connected with our manufactures. Provisions and all other necessities are extremely cheap, potatoes and butchers' meat excepted, the former of which articles is always scarce at this season of the year, and the latter comparatively little used by our working classes. Under these circumstances, I am glad to be able to add, that the condition of our labouring population and manufacturing districts, generally, is at present very satisfactory.”

I have read these letters for the purpose of encouraging the hope that, although there may have been a reduction in the declared value of manufactures exported, the condition of the manufacturers is not necessarily deteriorated. These letters furnish conclusive proof that at least in three large towns, separated from each other by a wide interval, and being the seats of different branches of manufacture, the condition of the working classes is better than it has been for some preceding years.

I have now, I believe, examined the main grounds on which the hon. member has impeached the commercial policy adopted of late years, and I submit to the House that the charges which he brought against that policy have not been sustained. The House must be aware of the deep interest I naturally take in this question. I cannot forget—although I allude to the circumstance without the slightest feeling of asperity—that I have been exposed to a good deal of misrepresentation and obloquy. I bear not the slightest ill-will to any one on that account; I must however put in my claim to vindicate that policy which I believe to have mainly contributed to preserve this country from great disasters. The hon. member said on Monday night that the doctrine which he had repeated on former occasions, namely, that we cannot fight hostile tariffs by free imports, had never been contested. It is my intention to contest it now. If I refrained from disputing the proposition on any previous occasion, it was from no disrespect to the hon. member's ability or station; but the subject has been more than once brought forward at the close of a debate, when I had no sufficient opportunity of entering into an argument of a not very inviting nature.

Before I advert to it, I must however examine fully the hon. gentleman's reasoning with reference to the poor-law. I shall draw from the facts to which he referred a conclusion exactly opposite to that at which he arrived. The hon. member said—“See how the poor-rate has increased—look at the charge per head for maintaining

paupers—see how many more able-bodied labourers are paupers in 1848 than there were in 1846; and, with those results before you, can you refuse to join in condemning the policy which has produced them?"

Let us test the validity of this argument. The hon. member adopted, and I am not surprised at it, the paper I hold in my hand, which is contained in the report of the poor-law commissioners, giving the cost of maintaining the poor for seven years when the price of wheat was lowest, and the cost of maintaining them for seven years when the price of wheat was highest. The hon. member drew from this return the inference that when wheat was low, poor-rates were high, and that when wheat was high, poor-rates were low. I cannot blame the hon. member for making use of this return; but I am surprised that public officers like the poor-law commissioners should have voluntarily made such a return. It is the most foolish document ever presented to the House. One would suppose, of course, that the poor-law commissioners had selected seven consecutive years in each case. The hon. member certainly did not state that they were consecutive years, but imagining that they were, I confess I was startled when I heard him state that in seven years of a low price of wheat, the cost of maintaining the poor was greater than during seven years when the price of wheat was high. I looked at the return, and I found that this is the order in which the commissioners have taken their seven years of low prices—1839, 1840, 1841, 1848, 1842, 1847, and 1838. Having made this extraordinary selection, the poor-law commissioners state the conclusion at which they arrived, namely, that in the seven years when the price of wheat was lowest, the cost of maintaining the poor, per head, was 6*s.* 3*d.*, whilst it was only 6*s.* 1½*d.* in the seven years when wheat was highest. How can the commissioners draw any conclusion from years selected in such a manner? Could it be supposed that the influence of the high price of wheat in a year like 1801, for example, when it rose to 106*s.* a quarter, was exactly limited to that particular year? What useful purpose could be served by taking a parcel of years in this way, and making no allowance for the subsequent effect which two bad or two good harvests in succession must have on the industry of the country? Take the very page in which this return of the poor-law commissioners appears—there appears in that page the amount of poor-rate and the average price of wheat for each year from 1834 to 1848. Does that justify the conclusion, that when the price of wheat is low, the cost of maintaining the poor is enhanced. By the way, I will here refer to one of the hon. member's arguments which has just occurred to me. I was surprised to hear him state, on the authority of Mr. Jones, that when the farmers' income was £100,000,000, they spent it all in manufactures; and that when it was reduced by twenty-five per cent., their power of encouraging our manufacturing industry was abridged in the same proportion. According to that theory it would, no doubt, be a good thing to have corn at 100*s.* a quarter. Only make it apparent that the well-being and comfort of the manufacturing population is dependent on a high price of wheat, and it would be the most cogent argument in favour of high prices ever adduced. To revert, however, to the return of the poor-law commissioners, giving the poor-rate and price of wheat from 1834 to 1848. Taking the average of the years 1834, 1835, 1836, and 1837, the price of wheat was 47*s.* There had been a cycle of good years, and at the end of it the country was left in a state of comparative ease and prosperity.

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| In 1834 the price of wheat was.....      | 51 <i>s.</i> 11 <i>d.</i> |
| 1835       "       "       "       ..... | 44 <i>s.</i> 2 <i>d.</i>  |
| 1836       "       "       "       ..... | 39 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i>  |
| 1837       "       "       "       ..... | 52 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i>  |

At the commencement of the period, in 1834, the sum expended in the relief of the poor was £6,317,000. The beneficial influence of low prices during four years, reduced the sum expended in the relief of the poor to £4,044,000, in 1837. The rate per head was reduced from 8*s.* 9*d.* in 1834, to 5*s.* 5*d.* in 1837. The whole of this reduction must not be ascribed to the cheapness of corn; some portion is, doubtless, referable to the improved administration of the poor-laws. High prices succeed; and what was the case in the cycle of years in which they prevailed? In 1838 there was no material change; the total sum expended was £4,123,000; the rate per head 5*s.* 5½*d.* Four years of high prices succeed.

|                           |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| In 1839 the price is..... | 69s. 4d. |
| 1840     "     .....      | 68s. 6d. |
| 1841     "     .....      | 65s. 3d. |
| 1842     "     .....      | 64s. 0d. |

The average price being 66s. 9d. Thus the average price of wheat, which at the end of 1837 was 47s., rose in four years, from 1839 to 1842, to 66s. 9d. In 1843 the poor-rate, which had been £4,044,000 in 1837, was £5,208,000; the rate per head, which in 1837 was 5s. 5d., was in 1843, 6s. 5½d. The next three years, 1844-5-6, formed a cycle of good years. In 1844 the price of wheat was 51s. 5d.; in 1845, 49s. 2d.; in 1846, 53s. 3d.; the average of the three years being 50s. 9d. There was a corresponding effect on the total sum levied for poor-rates, and on the rate per head. The total sum expended was reduced from £5,208,000 in 1843, to £4,954,000 in 1846. The rate per head was reduced from 6s. 5½d. in 1843, to 5s. 10d. in 1846.

There is, however, a striking contrast between 1846 and 1848, and on that contrast the main argument rests. In the latter year there is a great increase in the aggregate poor-rate, and a great increase in the rate per head at which the poor are maintained; but under what circumstances? You had the price of wheat in 1847 rising from 67s. to 75s., to 88s., to 92s. In 1848 you had distress, an increase of the number of able-bodied poor, the workhouses full, the poor-rates increased. What is the obvious inference? Surely, that dearth of provisions is the greatest misfortune. Surely the experience of 1848 warrants a conclusion the very opposite of that which some would draw from it. In 1847 such was the pressure of scarcity, that you hastily suspended the duties on corn, you suspended the navigation laws, and sent ships to collect corn from every quarter of the globe. Your whole condition was abnormal. In three years you expended £51,000,000 sterling in the purchase of food. In 1846-47-48 you expended £51,000,000. The demand for this vast quantity of food, in addition to your own supply, was sudden and unforeseen. You could not expect that there could be a corresponding amount of manufactured goods exported in return for such a demand. It was not only that we ourselves were suffering from scarcity. Every country of continental Europe was suffering at the same time, not perhaps in an equal, but in a very considerable degree. Are you surprised that your foreign trade should have been depressed, when every country in Europe was compelled to purchase food at extravagant prices? You had severe pressure at home—severe pressure in nearly a corresponding degree in foreign countries which used to be customers for your goods, and you must, of course, expect diminished trade. It is the natural consequence of diminished demand, of the necessity of applying to the purchase of food those means which in ordinary years are applied to the purchase of your manufactures. Of that distress which you were suffering in 1848, free trade was not the cause. The high price of provisions and continental convulsions were the chief causes of a distress which was mitigated and not increased by the freedom of commercial intercourse.

It is on these grounds that I submit that the impeachment of the commercial policy of the last seven years has entirely failed. I now propose to consider the merits of the policy which the hon. member would substitute in its place. I believe this question—I mean the principles which are to govern your commercial legislation—to be the most important question that can occupy the attention of parliament. A minister may make a blunder, and that may be corrected; but an error in the principles which direct your commercial legislation is an error likely to prevail for a long series of years. [Cheers.] I am glad to hear that in one sense we are all agreed; we have all the same object in view—the encouragement of domestic industry. I believe as firmly as any of those who dissent from me with respect to the mode in which the object is to be attained, that it is a vital question for the country—that unless our domestic industry be encouraged, we cannot expect peace, contentment, or prosperity. The point at issue is not the end, but the means by which that end can be best attained—the means by which we can most effectually encourage domestic industry.

We should greatly underrate the importance of this question if we supposed that it concerned only the accumulation of wealth. It is a question which affects the

happiness of the people, which affects their social progress, their progress in morals, in the enjoyment of life, in refinement of taste and civilisation of manners—it concerns all these things at least as much as it concerns the accumulation of wealth.

It is considered by a powerful party that for the advancement of these great objects, the return to the principle of protection is indispensable. Of that party, whatever causes of dissension may have arisen, I never shall speak without sincere respect. I believe them to be in error as to this principle of protection—but that error is influenced by no selfish or interested motive. They are, I am convinced, actuated by a sincere desire to promote the happiness of the working classes, in an equal degree with those from whom they differ as to the means by which that end can be attained. The views of this powerful party have been explained and advocated by men of great ability—by men prepared to give practical effect to those views, if the present government be displaced. To preclude misrepresentation or mistake, I shall quote the words in which the noble lord at the head of the party, Lord Stanley, has announced the principle on which he is resolved to act. Speaking in the House of Lords, on the 1st of February of the present year, Lord Stanley said—“I am not favourable to prohibitory duties, but I maintain that it is necessary to give to our fellow-countrymen that amount of protection which is necessary to counter-balance any disadvantages that may arise from the admission of foreign produce.”

“We must return to the principle of protection.” Again, on the 23rd of June last, addressing the company at the mansion-house, Lord Stanley observed—“Foremost among the measures which we believe to be essential to the prosperity of this great country, is the recognition of this great principle—that legislative encouragement ought to be given to every branch of domestic industry.”

In bringing forward the present motion, the hon. gentleman, the member for Buckinghamshire, was equally explicit. He observed, speaking of our recent legislation—“That we have established a new commercial system, which mistakes the principles upon which a profitable exchange can take place between nations; that we can only encounter the hostile tariffs of foreign countries by countervailing duties; that such a system occasions, not scarcity and dearth, but cheapness and abundance. Hitherto,” he said, “in enforcing the principles upon which the theory of reciprocity in commerce depends, I have laboured under the disadvantage of appealing only to abstract reasoning; now, however, we have practical results before us in the sufferings of our people, and in the decline of our wealth.”

Now, in opposition to these doctrines, I boldly maintain that the principle of protection to domestic industry—meaning thereby legislative encouragement for the purpose of protection—duties on import imposed for that purpose, and not for revenue, is a vicious principle. I contest the hon. gentleman's assumption, that you cannot fight hostile tariffs by free imports. I so totally dissent from that assumption, that I maintain that the best way to compete with hostile tariffs is to encourage free imports. So far from thinking the principle of protection a salutary principle, I maintain that the more widely you extend it, the greater the injury you will inflict on the national wealth, and the more you will cripple the national industry.

I found my opinion on these grounds. The capital of the country is the fund from which alone the industry of the country can be maintained. The industry of the country will be promoted in proportion as the capital employed in its maintenance shall be increased. The augmentation of capital must depend upon the saving from annual revenue. If you give for certain articles produced at home a greater price than that for which you can purchase those articles from other countries, there is a proportionate diminution of the saving from annual revenue. If you attempt to redress the injustice which would be done by selecting one particular interest for special protection—if you aver that your object is to extend equal protection to all branches of domestic industry—then I reply, that the more extensive that system of protection, the greater will be the aggregate loss of annual revenue—the greater will be the check to the augmentation of capital; that is to say, of the means by which labour is to be maintained. So far from encouraging domestic industry, you are, in the first place, by legislative interference, diverting capital from its natural and most profitable application; and you are, in the second place, by giving more for every article than it is worth, exhausting the source from which alone capital can be maintained and augmented.

The principles which should govern the commercial intercourse of nations, do not differ from those which regulate the dealings of private individuals. It is the same law which determines the planetary movements and the fall of the slightest particle of matter to the earth. It is the same law which determines the accumulation of wealth by the private trader and the powerful kingdom. We only obscure and mystify the truth, by overlooking the principle which governs the dealings of every man of common sense.

Adam Smith illustrates the great doctrines of political economy, by a reference to the simplest transactions. He says—"It is the maxim of every prudent master of a family, never to attempt to make at home, what it will cost him more to make than to buy. The tailor does not make his own shoes, but buys them off the shoemaker. The shoemaker does not make his own clothes, but employs a tailor."

He says, moreover, that—"What is prudence in the conduct of every private family, can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom."

Now, let us consider the case of two artisans or dealers, resident in the same town. The shoemaker and the tailor will answer the purpose as well as any other. The one wants clothes, the other shoes; they think it right to encourage the domestic industry of their own town—to deal with each other, and not with strangers. The shoemaker gives ten shillings to the tailor for a certain quantity of clothes which he could get for seven shillings if he bought them in a neighbouring town. But by way of compensation the tailor gives him his custom, and pays ten shillings for shoes which he also could buy from a distant shoemaker for seven. Now, is there any encouragement in this to domestic industry? Is there not a loss of six shillings to the town in which they live, as the result of the dealing between these tradesmen? What are shillings in this case? They are the mere representatives of labour. Let a shilling represent the labour of an hour. Is it not clear that in each case ten hours of labour have been devoted to produce that for which seven would have sufficed? Have not six hours of labour been unprofitably applied? Could not each party have procured that for which he gave the labour of ten hours by the labour of seven—and thus have had three hours at his disposal, with which to procure something else?

Now, let us try whether the arguments in favour of protection will justify this apparently unprofitable waste of time and labour? It may be alleged, that in the town from which the low-priced articles could be procured, the rent of houses is much lower, or the cost of food much less, and that, therefore, the residents in that town can afford to supply their goods at a cheaper rate. Is this any reason for not dealing with them? Is it any sort of compensation to those who are burdened with a high rent for their houses—or who pay too much for their food—that they should pay ten shillings for their clothes, or ten shillings for their shoes—when they could buy them elsewhere for seven? It may be that the town which produces the cheap articles requires nothing, or will take in return nothing, which the less favoured town produces. Some will consider that a decisive reason for withholding custom from strangers; they will say—"All our purchases must in that case be made with ready money—all the gold and silver coin will be sent out of the town, and nothing left wherewith to pay the wages of labour, and conduct the ordinary dealings of life."

Do not believe one word of this. Do not believe it either in the case of towns, in the same country, or of different countries in the great community of nations. Each town and each country will command the amount of currency which it requires for its own purposes, undisturbed in the slightest degree by consulting its manifest interest, namely, by purchasing that which it wants in the cheapest market. [Derisive cheers.]

Yes, by purchasing that which it wants in the cheapest market. You consider this a very low and unworthy principle; that it is a doctrine of the Manchester school; that it is a novel doctrine of some speculative political philosophers, and that it may be safely rejected. But this doctrine of purchasing in the cheapest market is not a doctrine of speculative philosophers only. It is not a doctrine introduced by modern economists. It is, no doubt, a doctrine sanctioned expressly and directly by the authority of Adam Smith. It is the doctrine of Say and of Hume. It is opposed to a doctrine which was fashioned some eighty or ninety years since, of which such writers as Montesquieu and Voltaire were the patrons; but Smith, and Say, and Hume, demonstrated the true principles which ought to regulate the commercial.

policy of a nation. There are others, however, besides writers on political economy, who have adopted those doctrines. When this country was suffering from great depression of trade in the year 1820, certain practical men, merchants and bankers of London, presented to this House a petition under the sanction of the honoured name of Alexander Baring. Those merchants and bankers propounded this doctrine—"That the maxim of buying in the cheapest market, and selling in the dearest, which regulates every merchant in his individual dealings, is strictly applicable as the best rule for the trade of the whole nation."

In that memorable petition, it was observed—"That, although as a matter of mere diplomacy, it may sometimes answer to hold out the removal of particular prohibitions or high duties, as depending upon corresponding concessions by other States in our favour, it does not follow that we should maintain our restrictions in cases where the desired concessions on their part cannot be obtained; our restrictions would not be the less prejudicial to our own capital and industry, because other governments persisted in preserving impolitic regulations."

[Mr. Newdegate: What is the year?—1820. The hon. gentleman will derive great practical benefit from the perusal of this petition. *Handing the volume which contained it to Mr. Newdegate.*] That petition was presented by Lord Ashburton when Mr. Alexander Baring, and enforced by him with the greatest earnestness.—[Mr. Newdegate: The petition was presented the year after your act of 1819.]—The hon. member says that petition was presented within a year of 1819. We will discuss the act of 1819 whenever he pleases; but, in the meantime, he will not deny that, great distress existing in 1820, whatever be the cause in which it originated, the merchants and bankers of London declared to the House of Commons that free trade was the proper remedy.

It is said, we cannot fight hostile tariffs with free imports. This is an epigrammatic form of stating the argument. The hon. gentleman, the member for Buckinghamshire, explains it more fully, when he says, that the only way in which we can encounter hostile tariffs is by countervailing duties. Let us dispassionately examine this position. Let us consider it in its application to the three greatest countries with which we deal—Russia, France, and the United States. Take first, the United States. The United States imposes duties on our manufactures; say, 20 per cent. on our cotton goods. With such a rate of duty, we maintain a not very successful competition in the markets of the United States. What course are we to take? We ought, it is said, to impose countervailing duties on American produce. Would it be wise to have a high duty on raw cotton? What should we gain by it? A complaint is made on the part of the English cotton manufacturer. He says—"I meet the United States' manufacturer in neutral markets; I meet him in his own market; in the latter to a disadvantage, but in the neutral markets I maintain my ground."

Shall we combat the hostile tariff of America by countervailing duties on the produce of America—that is, chiefly on raw materials, and cotton among the foremost? Will you tell me how you favour the English manufacturer by imposing a duty upon cotton? What other class in this country would derive any advantage from such an impost? We are not dealing with any exceptional case, such as that referred to in the petition of the merchants of London. We are not considering the policy of a duty on American produce as a matter of mere diplomacy, for the purpose of extorting some concessions in our own favour. We are discussing whether as a principle of commercial policy the hostile tariffs of other countries ought to be combated by countervailing duties. I contend against that doctrine. I say you will more successfully combat the disadvantages under which you labour from hostile tariffs, by buying that of which you stand in need in the cheapest market.

Let us take the case of France. France will not admit our hardwares or our cotton goods. How should we deal with France? Should we impose a heavy duty on her wines? If so, you are going to reintroduce the principle of the Methuen Treaty into your legislation. By that treaty, because Portugal undertook to admit our woollen goods at low rates of duty, you admitted her wines on a better footing than the wines of France. I thought that treaty had been practically abrogated with the unanimous consent of all persons of experience in matters of trade. In 1845, without procuring any equivalent concessions from France, we reduced the

duty on foreign brandy; it was 22s. 6d. per gallon, we reduced it to 15s. What has been the consequence? Have we suffered from that course? Has the advantage been an advantage to France alone? If, instead of reducing the duty from 22s. 6d. to 15s., we had maintained the high duty, we should have had to pay a higher price for our brandy, and certainly should have gained nothing in revenue. You got good brandy, by legal trade, at a less price. Has the revenue fallen by that reduction? In 1845, the revenue from brandy was £1,208,000, the duty was 22s. 6d.; you reduced it to 15s., and in 1848 the revenue was £1,207,000. Thus there has been no reduction of revenue, an increase of importation, a reduction of price to the consumer, a reduction of smuggling—every advantage, and no corresponding disadvantage. What should we have gained by fighting, in this case of French produce, a hostile tariff, with countervailing duties?

We are dissatisfied with Russia. We think the Russian is a restrictive tariff. Would it be any advantage to lay a heavy duty on the raw produce of Russia—upon her tallow—upon the several articles imported from that country, which we use in our own manufactures?

No doubt it would be for the advantage of trade—for our own advantage, and for the advantage of the countries with which we deal—that hostile tariffs should be reduced. It is nothing but the private interest of powerful individuals that induces the governments of those countries, to the manifest injury of the great body of the people, to keep up those restrictive duties. Unquestionable as would be the benefit derived from their reduction, still, if that benefit cannot be obtained, I contend that by the attempt at retaliation you would aggravate your own loss. Let this also be borne in mind, that the return to a retaliatory system, after it has been once abandoned, is infinitely more difficult than the continued adherence to it might have been. To re-establish duties upon the import of foreign produce, to be regulated by the principle of reciprocity, would be accompanied with insuperable difficulties. You have, in my opinion, no alternative but to maintain that degree of free trade which you have established, and gradually to extend it, so far as considerations of revenue will permit.

These are the grounds upon which I join issue with the hon. gentleman, and upon which I earnestly deprecate the success of a motion which would displace the noble lord and the advocates of commercial freedom, for the purpose of placing in power those who contend for countervailing duties, who would establish, that which they call protection to domestic industry, but which, I believe, would be nothing but discouragement and detriment to that industry.

Feeling grateful to the House for their attention, I proceed to the last topic to which I shall advert—that which formed a principal part of the argument of the noble lord who spoke last—namely, the agricultural condition of the country. I view the depression of that great interest with deep concern. I deeply regret the suffering that prevails among the agriculturists. So far as personal interest is concerned, my own is deeply involved in the prosperity of agriculture. If that consideration could bias for a moment the views of a public man, I should feel as much as any one, even on that account, the depression that exists. There can be no question, particularly after the notice given to-night by my right hon. friend, the member for Stamford, that one of the consequences of the success of this motion would be the restoration of protection to agriculture; that is to say, the re-imposition of duties on the food of the people. No more fatal boon could, in my opinion, be offered to the agriculturists than any such protection as that which you profess to give. I entreat the friends of agriculture—I address myself especially to the noble lord who spoke before me—to consider the real value of this protection. The noble lord said, that in 1836 the farmers had very low prices; but then they had abundant produce, and that there were no complaints. On this point the noble lord is mistaken. Abundant produce without the means of export had caused very low prices, and there were at the same time loud complaints and severe distress. I sat with other members on a committee which inquired into the condition of agriculture, and which attempted in vain to suggest a remedy. I do entreat the noble lord's attentive consideration to the circumstances of that period—to the years 1833, 1834, and 1835. Protection to domestic produce existed in the highest degree. The duty on foreign wheat, when the price was less than 63s. was £1 : 4 : 8 the quarter; when it was less than 67s.,

£1:0:8; when it was under 62s., £1:5:8—abundant protection, surely, so far as law could give protection. Meat was absolutely prohibited—animals of all kinds serving for subsistence were prohibited. Now, let us take the price of wheat. In 1833 the average price was 52s. 11d.; the lowest price of the year having been 49s. 2d. In 1834 the average price was 46s. 2d.; the lowest price 40s. 6d. In 1835 the average price was 39s. 4d., it having at one time fallen so low as 36s.; this took place with protection carried to an extravagant degree. Was the depression of price owing to the importation of foreign corn? Certainly not, for foreign corn was practically prohibited by the amount of duty. In 1833 the whole amount of wheat imported was 82,000 quarters; in 1834, 64,000; in 1835, 28,000. The noble lord says there were no complaints. I do assure the noble lord that there are no complaints now made with regard to the state of agriculture at the present period which at all correspond with the complaints made at that time. The committee of this House was appointed in 1836; and very intelligent and respectable men were sent to represent the interests of agriculture, and give evidence to that committee. I will refer to that given by the first six of the witnesses deputed on the part of the agriculturists to represent their condition. The evidence of others is in concurrence with theirs. Now, recollect, you had had abundant harvests, the exclusion of foreign corn, and extravagant protection. And what was the state of agriculture? This is the account of it given by the witnesses to whom I have referred:—

The first witness, John Buckwell says—"He farmed 700 acres near Lechlampstead, Buckinghamshire. This winter had sold wheat at 4s. 6d. per bushel. The lowest price at which we can grow wheat is 56s. a quarter. Now we have not above 40s. Within twenty years there has been a considerable change of tenantry. When new ones have come, they have gone within a few years."

He was asked—"Why?—Because they could not stand any longer. What has become of them?—They have gone to the workhouse. Have they been men of prudence and character? Yes, in general."

John Houghton, the next witness, farmed, on his own account, in Berkshire, Middlesex, Northampton, Sussex, and Buckinghamshire. Received rents in those counties, and also Lincoln, Surrey, and Suffolk. Wheat ruinously low on clay lands. Rent paid out of capital. Mr. Cayley asked him—"At what period did this distress you speak of commence?—From 1828 and 1829. Up to the present period we have been gradually getting worse."

Mr. John Rolfe was the next witness; he says—"There has been no amelioration in the condition of the farmer since 1833. The very reverse, continued depression, loss of capital, and ruin to the farmers. You do not speak of improvident men?—No. I know several farmers that are on the brink of ruin. They are penniless. They are really hardworking, industrious men, and deserve every encouragement. They are sinking in consequence of the fall of prices."

Mr. John Curtis, the next witness—"Thinks the capital of the farmer has considerably diminished. Sees an alteration for the worse in the farmers. Last year paid his landlord's rent one-half out of his capital. At the present price of produce could not afford to pay any rent whatever; and that is the case generally with the farmers in his neighbourhood."

Mr. John Kemp said—"He farms 500 acres in Essex, of good quality; very little clay. As a farmer you are in distress?—Undoubtedly so. Has that distress been increasing gradually?—For the last eight years we were in a deplorable condition. The capital of the farmers has very much diminished. We were in that state in 1831. But for the good crops of 1832, half the farmers in our country would have been obliged to stop."

Mr. William Thurnall, Cambridgeshire, a farmer, miller, maltster, oil crusher, and general corn merchant—"Farms 400 acres. Lost the whole rent of his farm last year, and £300 the year before."

Mr. Cayley asked the witness—"What is the condition of the tenantry generally in your neighbourhood?—I think verging on insolvency generally—in the most desperate state that men can possibly be. My book debts with the farmers are not worth 10s. in the pound. I dare scarcely open a letter, knowing the state of the farmers, fearing it may contain notice of some bad debt. Are these men verging on insolvency, men of prudent character, and industrious habits?—I am speaking only



of that class of men. I would not trouble the committee with any others. And yet they are on the verge of ruin?—Yes, not only in Cambridge, but, generally speaking, great part of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex."

That is the evidence of the first six witnesses examined by the agricultural committee; and I now ask the noble lord, the member for West Sussex, whether he is not in error in supposing that in 1835 the abundance of produce compensated the farmer for the lowness of price, and that there were no complaints from the farmers at that period.

I have not denied that there is at present in some parts of the country severe agricultural distress. I have deeply lamented that it should exist. I trust, however, that the gloomy forebodings as to the future are not well-founded. I entreat those who are suffering to remember that heretofore undue apprehensions have been entertained. When, in 1842, the prohibition was removed from the import of meat and cattle, there was great and needless alarm, and considerable loss was the consequence. I entreat them to consider, whether it be not possible that the recent imports of foreign corn have been governed by other considerations than those which influence the usual course of trade; whether, from the disturbed state of some countries, and the desire of converting corn into money, we have not imported more corn than we should otherwise have done; whether there has not been in some cases a great loss on the import of foreign corn, and whether our own produce has not thus been unduly depreciated in consequence of circumstances unconnected with free trade. That is my impression. I entreat them also to consider this, that you never could, in the present state of public opinion, have maintained a law which would have given a guarantee for high prices in unfavourable seasons. In the south and west of England the harvest was deficient—the quality was inferior—probably much of the wheat grown was not worth 40s. a quarter. It might have been possible to devise a law which should have raised the price of that inferior corn to 50s. or even to 60s. per quarter. There would, in that case, have been some temporary compensation for deficient produce, but it would have been at the risk of creating disaffection and discontent, greatly outweighing the advantage of high prices gained by legislative intervention.

In the concluding part of his speech, the hon. gentleman, the member for Buckinghamshire, alluded to the condition of the labouring classes. He said, he thought the tendency of recent legislation had been to lower their condition. He described them as members of a powerful hierarchy, the greatest in the world. That is a romantic and poetical view of their condition. Let me indulge in a more prosaic, but more practical view of the real condition of that class of this great hierarchy, as it stood in the year 1842. Let me take the position of a mechanic at Paisley, or of a labourer in Dorsetshire, or one of the southern counties. Let me suppose that in 1842 each of them was in the receipt of 10s. a week, or, let us say 12s. a week for the mechanic, and 8s. for the labourer. First, consider the deductions you ought to make from this 12s. and 8s. a week, for house rent, for clothes, and medical attendance. Suppose there be in each case a family of three or four children. After making the deductions to which I have referred from the weekly receipt of wages, consider what are the various articles, the absolute necessities of life, which will be required for the sustenance of such a family. Then review the state of taxation as it existed in January 1842, so far as those articles were affected by it, and you cannot, I think, justly contend that the tendency of recent legislation has been unfavourable to the interests of the labouring classes.

At the commencement of the session of 1842—

|  |             |  |                 |
|--|-------------|--|-----------------|
| All Animals—Oxen, Sheep, Calves, Swine, were ..... | prohibited. | Hams, of all kinds .....                         | 28s. 7 cwt.     |
| Beef—fresh, or slightly salted .....               | prohibited. | Cheese .....                                     | 10s. 6d. 7 cwt. |
| Pork—fresh .....                                   | prohibited. | Butter .....                                     | 20s. 7 cwt.     |
| On salted Beef, a duty of .....                    | 12s. 7 cwt. | Tallow Candles .....                             | 63s. 4d. 7 cwt. |
| "    Pork,       " .....                           | 12s. "      | If the price of Wheat was 65s. per quarter ..... | 26s. 8d. duty.  |
| On Bacon,       " .....                            | 28s. "      | Oats, 25s.       " .....                         | 9s. 3d. "       |
| On Potatoes     " .....                            | 2s. "       | Barley, 33s.   " .....                           | 12s. 4d. "      |
| On Lard         " .....                            | 6s. "       |  |                 |

Indian corn, the great resource of the Irish people during the famine in 1846 and

1847, had a duty attached to it equal to that on barley, and varying with the price of barley.

Sir, it pleased this House to repeal some, and to reduce others of those duties. My belief is, that a wiser decision than that to which you came—to subject property to direct taxation within certain limits—to remove the prohibition upon foreign cattle—to permit swine and sheep to be imported—to reduce the duty on corn, on sugar, on lard, on butter, and on cheese—you never made. My belief is that you have been amply repaid for any loss you may have sustained by that reduction; that you have gained the confidence and goodwill of the labouring classes in this country, by parting with that which was thought to be directly for the benefit of the landed interest. It was that confidence in the generosity and justice of parliament which in no small degree enabled you to pass triumphantly through that storm which convulsed other nations during the year 1848. If, in 1842, and the following years, you had not made those reductions, had not subjected property to direct taxation, in order that you might relieve the labouring classes from the manifold impositions to which their subsistence was liable, such is the strength of your institutions, that you would no doubt have rode out the storm; but you would not have rode it out with the satisfaction of feeling that in the hour of peril you had the cordial support, the confidence, and goodwill of those who depend for their subsistence on the wages of labour.

Your metropolis did indeed present a majestic spectacle, when 160,000 men of the middle and working classes were ranged in her streets in the support of authority; with the determination, without reference to party distinctions, to preserve the peace of this city, and to defeat the designs of the disaffected. But it is my belief that the metropolis did not exhibit a perfect and complete example of the spirit by which this country was animated. You must go elsewhere before you can fully estimate the true state of the public feeling at that critical period. You must go to the great seats of manufacturing industry—to Stockport, to Paisley, to Manchester—to the mines—to the collieries—to districts not subject to the various influences which, in a great metropolis, are combined in favour of order, and the maintenance of authority. No, it is not London that I would select as the best example of the resolution which pervaded this country to maintain its laws and constitution. I would look to the West Riding of Yorkshire, to Lancashire, to places where, in former periods—in such times as 1818 and 1819—social order has been shaken to its foundation. In those districts, since the year 1846, the manufacturing interests have been deeply depressed, there has been great want of employment, great suffering from many privations. But see the patience and resignation with which that suffering has been borne; see how the inhabitants of these districts have conducted themselves, when, in combination with suffering and privation, they have had before their eyes the example of Irish disaffection—of revolutionary violence in France—of continental thrones subverted—of almost universal anarchy where before there had been peace.

I hold in my hand the report as to the state of Manchester, made by the chief officer of police. It bears date the 19th April, 1849.

He observes—“In presenting these returns, it is impossible to avoid referring with pride and satisfaction to the state of this borough during that period of excitement and anxiety which occurred early in the past year. Slight disturbances did certainly take place; but when all circumstances are considered, it will be, I think, generally felt that it is scarcely possible to have stronger or more satisfactory evidence of the general intelligence, and loyal and peaceable character of the population around us, than was afforded by the events which occurred during the period referred to. Whilst gratefully acknowledging—as one having some degree of official responsibility in the maintenance of order—the firmness, vigilance, and watchful care manifested for the preservation of the peace by the mayor and magistrates, the active organization of districts by the committees of the council, and the liberality of that body in granting efficient assistance to the ordinary police, as also the invaluable co-operation and assistance so readily afforded by the owners of warehouses, shops, and property, and by those in their employ, I venture to suggest that this borough was indebted to a still larger extent to the working classes and the mill operatives, for the maintenance of order: to that important class, for their expressive disapproval of, and absence of sympathy with, the proceedings of the few disorderly and disaffected

individuals who sought to create disturbance; for their determination to continue at their ordinary employment, and to resist any attempt at interference; and for the promptitude with which they at once agreed to be associated, for the protection of the property of their employers, we are unquestionably indebted, more than to any other source, for the success which happily crowned the efforts of the authorities to preserve the peace and protect the property within this borough, during a period of almost unprecedented excitement and alarm, and of great privation and distress."

Surely these are significant facts—surely these are decisive proofs that the policy you adopted in removing the duty on articles of first necessity, was a wise policy. That which was done was no act of a sagacious minister—the coming crisis was not foreseen by statesmen. It was no lucky accident. It is my firm belief that it pleased Almighty God to hearken to your prayers. It pleased him to turn "your dearth and scarcity," into "cheapness and plenty," and so to direct and prosper your consultations, that upon the eve of a great calamity, standing on the brink of a great precipice, you established "peace and happiness," on the foundations of "truth and justice." You have reaped the fruits of that policy. You have passed unscathed through the sternest trials to which the institutions of nations were ever subjected. You have stood erect amid the convulsions of Europe. And now you are to have a proposal made to you of some paltry fixed duty upon corn. Consider what this is. If it be 5s. on wheat, it will give a duty of 2s. 6d. on barley, and 2s. on oats; that is, 1s. 6d. on barley, and 1s. on oats more than you have at present. It is an equivocal advantage at the best. But by every consideration which can influence consistent and rational legislators—by the highest suggestions of a generous policy—by the coldest calculations of a low and selfish prudence, I do implore you to reject this proffered boon. I implore you not to barter away the glorious heritage for which you are indebted to your sagacious and timely policy—for the most worthless consideration for which, since the days of him who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, the greatest advantage was ever surrendered.

The motion was negatived by a majority of 140, and the House adjourned.

### AGRICULTURAL DISTRESS.

FEBRUARY 21, 1850.

Mr. Disraeli presented petitions from Great Marlow and Buckinghamshire, complaining of the unprecedented amount of distress existing amongst all classes connected with the land. The hon. gentleman, at the conclusion of a long and eloquent speech, submitted the following resolution:—"That this House will resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, to take into its consideration such revision of the laws providing for the relief of the poor of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, as may mitigate the distress of the agricultural classes."

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, whatever motives I might have for wishing to address the House upon a subject which has been brought forward with great ability, and with great moderation—whatever other motives I might have for wishing to address the House, the necessity under which I feel myself impelled to take a course different from that which will be taken by my right hon. friend the member for Oxford, is a sufficient reason for desiring to explain the grounds upon which that course is taken. For my right hon. friend I have the greatest respect and admiration. I was associated with him in the preparation and conduct of those measures to the desire of maintaining which he partly attributes the conclusion at which he has arrived—from him I derived the most zealous, the most effective assistance—and it is no small consolation for me to hear from my right hon. friend, although upon this particular motion we arrive at different conclusions, that his confidence in the justice of those principles for which we in common contended, and which are the foundation of the commercial policy which of late years has been adopted, remains entirely unshaken. Sir, before I address myself to some remarks of my right hon. friend, I wish to state, with respect to the agricultural interest, that I do not deny that it is suffering considerable distress, and that for that distress I feel, on every account, the warmest sympathy. [An hon. member on the opposition benches:

Oh, dear!] Sir, I believe the House will be of opinion that I take the most becoming course in passing without notice the inarticulate sounds with which the hon. gentleman has interrupted me, although those inarticulate sounds are, I admit, equally powerful with any arguments which the hon. gentleman could adduce, and at least equally entitled to consideration. I shall not be disturbed, however, by him from entering upon the discussion of this subject with the temper which befits it. Sir, I know not why the hon. gentleman should doubt my sympathy with the agricultural interest: my own interests are intimately connected with its welfare; and if any measures to which I have been party, however confident I may be of their general policy, and of the benefits that have resulted to the country at large from them, have visited a particular and most important special and peculiar interest, as it ought to be, with distress, the greater is the sympathy which I feel for its suffering. I say this, also, Sir, that if it be true that the occupying tenants of this country are unwilling to reduce the amount of labour which they employ—if they are making exertions to prevent the distress under which they may be suffering, from visiting those on whose labour they depend—they have, on that account, an additional claim to our respectful consideration. I do not, indeed, agree (whilst I admit the distress which prevails) with the apprehensions and the despondency of others as to the future condition of the agricultural interest. I believe there are special and peculiar causes affecting that interest at present. I think it was impossible to listen to the speech which was made in this House to-night by the hon. member for Westbury, without a strong presumption that at the present moment there are peculiar causes of depression and distress. Such causes have heretofore been in operation during the existence of protection: on frequent occasions in the speech from the throne, the distress of the agricultural interest has been fully acknowledged and lamented. Now, when protection is lost, some of the causes which affected the agricultural interests during its existence are in operation. As those interests recovered then, so I trust they will again recover. Those who are interested in their prosperity should beware that they do not retard the period of recovery by the propagation of undue alarm. This course has been taken on former occasions, and now is taken. I see professors of agriculture informing the agriculturists of Scotland that Indian corn can be introduced into this country from America at 12s. the quarter. They are telling the growers of oats that it is impossible for them to contend in the markets of their own country with the produce of the United States. They are alarming them with the assurance that Indian corn can be profitably imported at the price of 12s. the quarter, although, at the very time, the notorious fact is, that in the ports of Liverpool, Limerick, Cork, and Dublin, the price of Indian corn is fluctuating between 27s. and 31s. the quarter.

I was not present at the early part of this debate, during the speech of the hon. gentleman the member for North Northamptonshire. I am told that in that speech he made a personal appeal to me, and asked me on what grounds I thought there was an undue depression in the price of agricultural produce at present. Sir, I will tell him. It is because I find, in many continental countries—in countries which have the advantage (if advantage it be) of protection—I find in them the same depression of prices, and the same complaints which exist here. I find that depression of price to exist, notwithstanding that the markets of England have been open to them—notwithstanding that there has been a new and unusual demand for their agricultural produce. In France and in Belgium, our nearest neighbours (each of which countries has had, until a very late period, laws giving full protection to native produce), their agricultural productions are unusually depressed in price, and the occupying tenants are complaining that it is impossible to cultivate the land at the present prices. I say, then, there appears to be pervading many countries of Europe the same depression of prices of which we complain in this country. Whether or no it be attributable to precisely the same causes which have operated here—whether the same partial famine which we have had during the last three or four years, may have stimulated production, and the prices of foreign corn may have been depressed by an unusually productive harvest following several years of scarcity—I will not undertake to say. But the fact remains unquestionable, that in many countries of Europe there are the same complaints of lowness of price and depression that we have here. Sir, since I came into this House to-night, a gentleman was good

enough to place in my hands two documents. One is a circular from Antwerp, dated the 9th of February, 1850, which speaks of the state and prospects of agriculture in that part of the Continent. Observe, so recently as the 9th of the present month, it is said in this circular—"At our to-day's market the trade generally ruled dull, and the turn in prices was in favour of the buyers, though we do not expect an important decline, the value of the corn being already too depressed to pay the rents of our farmers."

The other document is a paper of a similar description, bearing the same date as the former, and issued at Nantes. This circular states—"Prices of corn are for the present very low everywhere in Europe; but, taking into consideration the good quality of some produces of our growth, and of our best brands of flour combined with the low freight obtainable now, we consider that our market deserves the attention of every one willing to risk interest of money at a low rate against the chances of a rise, whilst a further decline is quite improbable, as needy sellers have everywhere disposed of their crops, and also noticing that the continuance of the present prices in this part of France would soon involve the ruin of the landed interest."

Here, then, Sir, are two countries which have had, not only the new advantage of free importation into the English market, but also protection to native produce; and yet in these two countries agricultural produce is so depressed, that it is said ruin to the farmers is inevitable. From thence I conclude that causes other than the removal of protection have contributed to our own distress; and that probably there is some cause general in its operation which has produced the depression of prices complained of throughout a great part of Europe.

Another ground on which I view with less despondency than others the condition and prospects of agriculture in this country, is this, that I witness with the greatest satisfaction the increasing consumption of this country. It is not in the tendency to increased consumption only that I see indications of general prosperity; but the importation of corn in the course of the last year was in addition to an unusual consumption of native produce. The people of this country have not only imported, but they have consumed and paid for, by the produce of their own labour, no less than 5,600,000 quarters of wheat, that consumption of foreign corn not diminishing the consumption of wheat of our own growth. In 1849, as compared with 1848, there has been an increase in the consumption of British wheat, and concurrently with the increase in the consumption of British wheat there has been the enormous consumption of 5,600,000 quarters—not, observe, of Indian corn, not of oats, not of rye, but of the noblest grain, namely, of wheat. By whom has that wheat been consumed? When we are asking for proofs of the improved condition of the country, why should we minutely enter into these details? Why not rely on the one conclusive proof supplied by the fact that 5,600,000 quarters of foreign wheat have been imported, paid for, and consumed? By whom? Not by the upper classes. I will venture to say, that the quantity of bread eaten by the aristocracy has very little increased—that the quantity consumed by their households and domestics has very little increased amongst the more affluent of the middle classes. Probably amongst the middle classes, amongst those living on moderate incomes, in times of prosperity their consumption of luxuries may be increased; but the consumption of bread—the great element of human life—is not increased in any great degree. No, Sir, this consumption of foreign wheat has taken place in consequence of the improved condition of those who live by labour. You will not have millions of quarters of wheat consumed, except that millions of mouths can be found to eat them. And I want no better indication of general prosperity—I except, of course, the agriculturists, whose distress I admit—but I want no better proof of the general prosperity, of the general ease and the general comfort, than the fact that there has been an increase in the consumption of bread, and bread of the best quality, perfectly unparalleled. Well, Sir, if we can only continue that consumption—if by our legislation, under the favour of Divine Providence, we can continue the demand for labour, and make our trade and manufactures prosperous, we shall not only be increasing the sum of human comfort and happiness, but we shall be giving to the agriculturists of this country the best assurance, by increased demand, of ultimate prosperity. Consider the daily demand for agricultural produce, in the time of manufacturing prosperity, in such places as Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Bir-

mingham, and the great mining districts. When we speak of agricultural produce, the term is not limited to corn; it includes meat, milk, cheese, and butter. If you take into the account the daily increasing facilities of transport, and the advantage of the vicinity of markets, surely the agriculturists of this country need not fear competition with those of any other.

Sir, when I gave my consent to the address in answer to the speech from the throne, I had no impression that it was intended to slight the distress of the agriculturists. The words used, indeed, were that there were complaints; but I understood that there was an admission of distress, and a sincere feeling of regret for its existence. If that had not been the construction I placed upon the address—if I thought there was any intention of slight—any intention to imply that the complaints of distress were unfounded or unworthy of notice, the answer to the speech from the throne should never have had my support. I will now apply myself to the speech of my right hon. friend the member for the University of Oxford, and will proceed to state the grounds on which I come to a conclusion different from his. My right hon. friend takes the specific terms of the motion made by the hon. gentleman the member for Buckinghamshire, and contends that he is perfectly at liberty to dismiss all the extraneous considerations connected with it, and to consider only the abstract proposals which are contained in the motion. Now, there I differ from my right hon. friend. It is all very well to say to a very young member of this House, "I make a proposal for the House to resolve itself into committee, in which the whole question will be open for consideration. Go into committee; you will be pledged to nothing; hear my proposal; reject what is objectionable, and modify what is capable of modification. Do this, and you will conscientiously discharge your duty; and, even should you agree to no part of my proposal, you will at least have the merit of showing your sympathy for the farmer." But, Sir, I say that that is not the construction which the tenant-farmers will place upon the motion of the hon. gentleman. He will have (if his motion be agreed to) excited the hopes of the agriculturists. The hon. gentleman is not chargeable with any attempt at deception; but let others well consider the circumstances under which we are discussing this question. A proposal was made for an amendment to the address—some contended that by that amendment the issue intended to be joined was, whether protection to agriculture should be re-enacted, or not. ["No, no!"] Some certainly considered that that was the question at issue. The hon. member for North Northamptonshire, said to-night that he thought that that issue was fairly raised upon the amendment to the address—that the Lords and Commons had decided against protection—and that he would not ask his friends to occupy the House with needless debates which would result in nothing. That, in short, he considers the question of protection decided. ["No, no!"] I do not mean decided permanently and for ever; but if the hon. member who cries "No, no," had heard the speech of his hon. friend the member for North Northamptonshire, as I heard it, he would have heard him say that he considered the question decided, so far as the present parliament was concerned. Well, Sir, after that decision, a motion is made for the purpose of giving to the agricultural interests the compensation to which they are said to be entitled for the wrong done to them by the removal of protection. The hon. gentleman the member for Buckinghamshire contended last year, and still contends, that the burdens unjustly thrown upon the landowners exclusively are not less than £12,000,000 a year: that they are subjected by general and local taxation, including the land tax, to an amount of annual taxation from which they are entitled to relief of not less than £14,000,000. This Session he says—"I won't go into the general and extended question at the present time; I propose now only the partial removal of taxation from the agricultural interest to the amount of £2,000,000 only. But don't be deceived, this is only the first of a series of measures. Others will follow, adopting the same principles." Even after those the question is still open, for although this proposal is brought forward as a compensation for protection, at any rate as a measure rendered the more necessary and just by its removal, the hon. gentleman gives us no assurance that, after we have granted this demand, he will not avail himself of the earliest opportunity of reviving that system of protection which he contends it is the true policy of this country to adopt. This removal of two millions of taxation from the agricultural interest—this transfer of that amount from them to other

payers of taxes—is accompanied by a distinct notice that this is not a measure closing the account—not a measure with which the agricultural interest ought to be satisfied—that it is but a small and partial instalment of a great debt—and that, if it be acquiesced in by us, the claim for the remainder will be prosecuted. And therefore, Sir, my right hon friend the member for the University of Oxford cannot say that he is deceived by the motion of the hon. gentleman. He cannot disregard extraneous considerations, and limit himself to the simple abstract proposal. It is a proposal involving a principle. If he votes for this proposition for the purpose of giving satisfaction to the agricultural interest, and then refuses to follow up the series of similar measures, the end which he has in view he will not gain. There will be no satisfaction with a mere partial admission of one portion of a great claim, the rest of which is to be contested. But what is this claim? and will the satisfaction of it be for the benefit of the class whose interest the hon. gentleman the member for Buckinghamshire advocates? Let us first consider it in the point of view in which my right hon. friend wishes to consider it, as a definite proposal, transferring £2,000,000 of taxes, now borne by real property, to the consolidated fund—ending, there—entailing no other consequences. I wish to consider the proposal in its bearing on the finances of the country. The proposal, then, now made is this—that previously to any exposition of the financial condition of the country by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we shall, by a vote of this House, determine that new charges to the amount of £2,000,000 be placed upon the consolidated fund. Now, let us consider the effect of such a measure upon the financial prospects of the country. Let us consider—that which I am willing to consider, I trust, in no unfair spirit—whether the course which we are invited to take be really for the benefit of that class for whose alleged advantage it is proposed. I am asked, then, to consent to the first of a series of measures which proposes at once to appropriate the whole of the assumed surplus of the present year. If followed up, it will appropriate the whole of the surplus which may progressively accrue, for several years to come. Because, mind, on the ground on which the hon. gentleman this year urges the exemption of real property from certain charges, he will, in future years, claim its exemption from others of a similar nature. This, however, by the way. In the present year, by the present motion, previous to the production of the budget, previous to the receipt of any authentic information as to the finances of the country, I am invited to consent to the appropriation of the whole of the surplus revenue, by establishing a new annual charge of £2,000,000 on the consolidated fund. Now, is such a course desirable, even in behoof of that interest now labouring under depression? I have always understood—I heard it from the hon. gentleman himself—that one great source of relief to the agricultural interest is the scrupulous maintenance of public credit, and the consequent reduction of the rate of interest, thus giving increased power to owners of land to relieve themselves from charges to which they are now liable. And although I differed from the hon. gentleman as to the mode by which he proposed to make capital cheap, still I thought that there was great force in his observation, that if you can maintain public credit, and thereby diminish the rate of interest, you are conferring benefit upon landed proprietors, and enabling them to relieve themselves from a portion of the difficulties under which they are labouring. What says my hon. friend the member for West Surrey? He tells us that we ought to have settled the mortgage question before repealing the Corn-laws; is my hon. friend about to settle the mortgage question by destroying the surplus? My hon. friend says—“the land labours under heavy mortgages”—mortgages, remember, all contracted under protection. [Loud ministerial cheering.] Ay, contracted under protection. What a picture of the state of landed property did my hon. friend draw! Estates overburdened with debt, estates of which the owners cannot keep possession, estates which must be sold. When, I ask, again, did these incumbrances arise? Can there be a stronger presumption against the advantages of protection if my hon. friend's account of the state of landed property be a true one? Admitting it to be true—admitting that many landlords are now paying for borrowed money at the rate of 4½ or 5 per cent.—my hon. friend thinks that before we repealed the Corn-laws, we should have enabled the landowners, by borrowing money at 3 per cent., to pay off the mortgages bearing interest at 5 per cent. Does my hon. friend really think that the

way to do this is to tell the fundholders that all the present year's surplus is to be appropriated, and that any surplus arising in future years will also be appropriated by relieving local taxation at the expense of the consolidated fund? I regretted to hear my hon. friend the member for West Surrey the other night speaking so lightly of the maintenance of public credit. Let me tell my hon. friend, that in any measures which shall destroy confidence in the public faith and in the maintenance of public credit, he will have but a short-lived triumph over the public creditor. The moment that he strikes a successful blow at that public creditor, he will strike one still more fatal to the landowners, whose interests he professes to advocate. Looking, then, at the bearings of the present proposal on the general financial condition of the country, looking at its special bearing on the landed interest, I should consider its acceptance as the most precipitate, the most unwise act which a legislative assembly ever committed. If, without giving to the responsible minister an opportunity of explaining his views on the financial position and prospects of the country, we should consent to appropriate the whole of this year's surplus revenue, and imply, by just inference, the appropriation of the surplus of future years, I repeat, Sir, we should take a course the most unwise, the most improvident which ever was taken by any legislature. But my right hon. friend, the member for the University of Oxford, says, "Oh, but there ought to be a revision of taxation." Now, I cannot conceive any two questions more important than these: first, having a surplus, will you maintain it intact for the purpose of inspiring such confidence in the public credit that the funds may rise, and the landed interest be thereby benefited? Secondly, in case you should decide against the maintenance of a surplus, how shall that surplus be applied in the remission of taxation with the greatest possible advantage to all interests, but, under present circumstances, especially to the agricultural interest? But by his vote to-night my right hon. friend will preclude us from considering either of these questions. He will consent to appropriate at once the whole surplus, by relieving one class at the expense of another. My right hon. friend says that he hopes to see the timber duty reduced, and the duty on bricks removed. How can he hope to see either the one or the other? How is it possible to make this revision of taxation—how is it possible to remove many taxes unduly bearing on the agricultural interest—if you choose to apply the whole surplus revenue by transferring charges borne by real property to the consolidated fund? Who can deny that there are considerations of the utmost importance connected with the revision of the duties I have mentioned. Take the duty on bricks. I must say to the agricultural interest, that if, by their assent to this motion, they preclude the Chancellor of the Exchequer from considering whether or no the brick duty shall be removed, they will be taking a course most injurious to their own interests. See how unfairly in different parts of the country this duty operates. Here, perhaps, is one county abounding in coal and stone—the latter advantageous for the construction of houses for all classes. There is another county without coal, with no command of stone, obliged to depend entirely upon bricks as the material for building. How heavily does this duty fall on a county so circumstanced, and especially on the landlord, who has cottages, and farm-houses, and farm-offices, to build and keep in repair! Excuse me for saying, that if you could get the duty upon bricks removed at a loss to the revenue of £400,000 or £500,000, you would be gaining a greater benefit for real property than you could hope for by carrying the proposal now before us. You wish to relieve real property. Well, all real property will be benefited by the removal of the duty on bricks. Take the sanitary condition of towns—a subject now occupying so much attention. Can you conceive anything of greater importance—anything affording greater facilities for the necessary local improvements in most districts—than a free command of the material essential to the construction of houses? The advantages to agriculture of enabling landlords to improve the farm buildings of occupying tenants has been often adverted to. The construction and improvement of farm buildings for the preservation of farm implements, and for the extended feeding of cattle, are daily becoming objects of increasing importance. Such objects are now obstructed and counteracted by the duty upon bricks. The pecuniary amount of the duty does not measure the extent of the obstruction. What is the consequence of the removal of excise duties? You have not only the advantage of the pecuniary burden taken off, but there is the abolition of an inquisitive excise



meddling with the application of skill, and the operations of labour. The bricks must be made of a certain size; so many inches long, so many broad, and so forth. There is the constant apprehension of prosecution for fraud; there is a constant impediment to the exercise of ingenuity and skill. Relieve us then of this brick duty: let men be permitted to mould clay into bricks of any dimensions they please. Will not you, the owners of real property, derive an immediate advantage from such a removal of a pecuniary burden, and such a stimulus to architectural ingenuity? I would have hon. members read the papers lately laid on the table of the House, on a question of vital importance to the social condition of this country—I mean the operation of the law of settlement. The consideration of that question will be forced on us. It would be premature to enter into it now; but read the able papers on the practical operation of the law of settlement, drawn up by the gentlemen employed for the special purpose, and you will understand the difficulties which arise at present in certain districts from the want of cottage accommodations. You will then be able to judge of the consequences of that want, of its effect upon the health and comfort of the labouring poor. You will find it stated that in some instances the labourers come to the farm on which they are employed, mounted on donkeys, on account of the distance of their residences from the place of their labour. Sir, these things ought not to be beneath our consideration. If it is in proof that on a certain farm, the name of which is given, there are not less than twenty donkeys employed to carry the people to their work—[Laughter, and cries of “Hear, hear!”] Sir, this is no fit subject for merriment at present. It is a subject suggesting topics for very serious consideration. It is fully shown in the reports to which I refer, that there are many labouring men whose strength is exhausted by the length of the distance which they have to come to their work. There are others forced into adjacent villages, where they pay £4 or £5 for the small and imperfect houses which they occupy. The remedy for these evils is to promote the construction of comfortable and convenient cottages by the removal of the brick duties, and to alter the law of settlement, so that there may be no legal discouragement to the providing of these comfortable habitations. If you admit that these are matters of importance—if you admit that they form part of a series of important considerations bearing on the social position of the labourer, do not preclude yourselves from entering upon the discussion of them by hasty resolutions, which preclude the wise revision of taxation. In the present state of the public revenue, before I give any opinion on the extent to which the revision of taxation may be carried, or on the policy of any remissions whatever, I shall wait until I hear the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. For, Sir, observe, the present is a peculiar period. Next year will necessarily come before us the question of the income-tax. It may be of the greatest importance that we should reserve for unfettered deliberation the question whether that tax should be continued, and, if continued, what modifications may be made in it. By affirming the proposal now before you, you will compel the continuance of the income-tax. [“No, no!”] I say, emphatically, yes; unless, indeed, by voting away the surplus this year, and discontinuing the income-tax next year, you contemplate the revival of the import duties upon food. I advise my right hon. friend the member for the University of Oxford well to consider that point. If we resolve to appropriate the surplus of the present year, and to establish a principle which implies a similar appropriation—the surplus of future years, and if at the same time the income-tax is to be discontinued—then it is manifest what are your intentions. It is manifest that, convinced by the arguments of the hon. member for West Surrey, you mean to enact that upon every article, without exception, imported from a foreign country, there shall be placed a duty. This is my hon. friend’s (Mr. Drummond’s) proposal. This is the proposal of him who declares that there is a struggle between capital and labour—between money and life—and that he is the unflinching advocate for labour against capital, and for life against money. What, then, is the course which he advises us to pursue? Is it to remove taxation from labour, and to place it upon capital? No! just the reverse. It is to tax labour, and exempt capital. My hon. friend says, “I never will be satisfied until the labourer can make his own bricks—can gather his own hops, and can brew his own beer.” And will my hon. friend rest satisfied unless the labourer can eat his bacon and his bread without paying a tax upon the import of them? This advocate for labour against capital, this advocate for life

against money, this friend of the poor, who says we never shall hear the last of it until the labourer can gather his own hops from his own hedge, and make his own bricks—this very man won't allow us to repeal the duty upon bricks—to—[“No, no!”] Yes, but you are taking a course which renders the remission of the brick duty impossible. True it is, if you are careless of the public credit, then, indeed, it matters not. Then, any day you please, you may do all you propose; you may appropriate surplus, repeal income-tax, remit the brick duty; but you cannot do all this, and at the same time maintain your obligation to the public creditor.

Now, let us see what this proposal will amount to, so far as benefit to the occupying tenant is concerned. I will not make a distinction between the occupying tenant and the landowner. I will assume the occupying tenant would derive the whole benefit from the change proposed, that there is that kind feeling on the part of landlords towards their tenants that they would not—supposing this proposition to be carried—act upon the rule of strict economic principle, and increase rents in proportion to the remission of local burdens. There would, therefore, arise a certain degree of benefit to the farmer. Let us estimate its real amount. This is a proposal to relieve real property from a charge to which it is subject—a charge, the amount of which I assume to be £2,000,000, and to transfer this charge to the consolidated fund. The burden is one not upon land exclusively, but upon real property, upon houses, mills, factories, as well as cultivable land. Now, the proportion which the land contributes to the tax is progressively diminishing, in consequence of the increasing prosperity of commerce and manufactures. That proportion of the £2,000,000 which falls on real property other than land, has, I say, been continually increasing. If you estimate the proportions paid in the year 1828, you would find that of the £2,000,000, to which all real property was subject, not less than £1,380,000 was then paid by land. In 1833, the amount paid by land had fallen to £1,260,000; in 1841, to £1,040,000; while in 1849, there is only £900,000 paid by the land out of the whole sum of £2,000,000. Consequently, since 1828, as the result of the improvements in manufactures and commerce, and of the increase of houses, there has been and is a gradual tendency to relieve the land by the transference of the tax to other descriptions of property. There is, at the same time, notwithstanding an increase in the population, a diminution of the cost of maintaining the poor, on account of the diminished cost of provisions. Under these circumstances the proposal is to grant relief from burdens upon real property to the extent of £2,000,000, the whole amount of these burdens which fall upon land being only £900,000. It is other descriptions of real property which are to have the largest share of the relief—houses, mills, and manufactories, the owners of which have been directly benefited, according to your own argument, by recent changes in our legislation. Up to the present hour we heard of nothing but of landowners having been sacrificed to millowners—that the manufacturers have been in the ascendant scale—and that the prices of provisions have been reduced expressly for their benefit. Yet now, in order to gain £900,000 for yourselves, you propose to relieve of a still greater burden, others whose condition you declare has been actually improved by free trade, while yours has been deteriorated. But will the occupying tenant be benefited by a change which, while it removes only £900,000 from the land, will remove from another description of property which has no claim whatever to relief, no less an annual charge than £1,100,000? How is that £1,100,000 to be provided for? By taxation, to which the occupying tenant must contribute his full share. What is the amount of benefit which the occupying tenant will receive—for I will admit, for the sake of argument, that he is to have the whole benefit? Threepence or fourpence in the pound will perhaps be the amount of his relief from direct charge; but he will have to bear increased taxation in order to make up the deficit of £2,000,000. What, then, will be the position of the occupying tenant? You are preventing the remission of those public taxes which press upon him. You are about to reduce the amount of his payments to the extent of threepence or fourpence in the pound; but that threepence or fourpence of advantage must be diminished by the increased charge which he will have to bear, in order to make up for the loss caused by the transfer of a pecuniary burden, more than one half of which falls on another party. It is my firm persuasion that the occupying tenant will derive no benefit whatever to compensate him for the loss you are about

to inflict. This proposition, then, is an impolitic one, even so far as it concerns the interest of those whom it is specially intended to serve. My belief is that agriculture, the landed interest, the occupying tenant, will find their interests better consulted by leaving it open to parliament to consider whether any remission of public taxation unduly pressing upon them can be made, than by taking off this small percentage in the pound. So far therefore as the interest of the land is concerned, I decidedly object to the proposal, even if reference be had solely to its own abstract merits. If, indeed, it has another object—if it be intended to involve a reversal of the financial policy upon which we have been acting for some years, I have other and still stronger objections. I maintain, that up to the year 1842, the apportionment of the public taxation was most unjust—that labour and those who live by labour were unduly burdened—that there was scarcely a single article which entered into the consumption of the poor man which was not heavily charged. His cheese, his butter, his bread, his meat, every thing that he consumed, every necessary of life, if brought from a foreign country, was subject to high taxation. The price of those articles, according to your own admission, has been reduced—by what? It has been reduced, I presume, by free competition, by the unrestricted import from foreign countries of that produce upon which the labourer lives. You now remove from real property a charge of £2,000,000, and you are about to impose that charge upon the labouring class, whose condition you considered in 1842—whom you thought unduly aggrieved by the pressure of taxation—whom you sought to relieve—whom you did relieve—and whose affection and gratitude you received in return. The relief you gave was material, but was not complete. There are still complaints of the tea duty, complaints of the soap duty, complaints of the window tax; you are fettering your liberty to consider all or any of these questions by appropriating this surplus. You are preventing the relief which it may be possible to give—relief much more valuable, much more extensive—by transferring this charge from the quarter where it is at present borne, and placing it upon the consolidated fund, I object to the justice of that transfer. I do not say that there may not be some burdens now borne by the land, in respect to which there may not be relief. I admitted in 1846 that the land was unduly burdened; that I thought the apportionment of local taxation was unjust; I attempted to give relief by transferring the whole charge of criminal prosecutions, the whole charge of the Irish police, half the charge of medical relief, the charge of schools—by placing these upon the consolidated fund. I am not prepared to say that full and complete relief was given in that respect—that the expenses of vaccination, or the militia, or the registration of voters, do not fall under the same principle. But I know this, that if you were to go into the committee for which the hon. gentleman moves, and were to deal with these trifling matters, and nothing else—were to say, as my right hon. friend (Mr. Gladstone) possibly may say, “I think there is an excellent case made out for the vaccination charges being transferred to the consolidated fund; but I am sorry to inform the occupying tenant that he can have no other relief afforded him”—your relief will provoke nothing but scorn. Nay, if you should resolve that lunatic asylums fall within the same principle, and that the charge for them may beneficially be transferred to the consolidated fund, the farmers will consider that you give the most decisive proof of being fit inmates of such asylums, by making such a proposition after the hopes which will have been excited by the success of such a motion.

Sir, my main objection to this proposal is, that it will imply, in the opinion of all those who rely on the promise of renewed protection, a reversal of the financial policy which we have of late adopted. I believe the welfare of this country is intimately connected with the relief of industry from undue taxation. I believe there is no more powerful instrument by which you can promote contentment and peace, and satisfaction with your legislation, than by convincing those who live by labour that we, the landed proprietors—that the aristocracy of this country—are willing to submit to sacrifices which shall relieve from taxation those articles of food on which the industrious classes depend for subsistence. You have reaped the full advantage of the remissions of such taxation; you have witnessed during the last three or four trying years more contentment, more true loyalty to the Crown, more submission to privation, more of determined refusal to favour the designs of sedi-

tious men—of men pretending sedition, but in general agitating for their own private gain—than you have experienced under any other state of legislation. The burdens you may at first impose, may be light; this first of the series of measures may but in a small degree affect the labour and industry of this country; but you will shake the confidence of all who live by labour by this indication of repentance as to the course you have of late pursued. The relief to land which your first measure will give, will be found inadequate; there will be a fresh demand for the fulfilment of your promise of protection: and you will probably end, if you are strong enough to prevail, by the reimposition of duties, if not corresponding in amount, at least in principle, with those which were removed in 1842, and in subsequent years, under the system of commercial policy which has been since pursued. I earnestly and sincerely deprecate that course. I deprecate it as intrinsically unjust—I deprecate it as most impolitic, from its tendency to deprive you of that confidence and good-will which have more than repaid you for any sacrifice you have made.

For the advice I gave you in 1846 to submit to those sacrifices, I have been exposed to charges for the last three or four months—the revival of charges of having acted unfaithfully and treacherously to interests which I undertook to defend. So far as intention is concerned, I entreat you to consider whether I could have any personal interest—any personal or political object, in giving the counsel which I gave, and in recommending the measures which were adopted. Admitting that there ought to be, with respect to the conduct and motives of public men, the utmost latitude of discussion, I shall abstain from any farther reference to the vituperation with which I have been assailed. There is, however, one charge that has been brought against me by the noble lord the member for North Nottinghamshire, which I must notice. That noble lord not only imputed to me mistaken conduct, but he declared, at a meeting held in the county which he represents, that I had a private and personal interest in recommending those changes of the law which I proposed in 1846. It would be as well if we abstained in our political controversies from lightly imputing to each other dishonest motives. I should be disposed to give the noble lord, in any course which he may take, credit for the purity of his motives, even while I might censure and denounce his acts. The noble lord has not treated me with equal forbearance; he not only thinks that my course has been most impolitic and unjust; he not only thinks that it has been unfaithful to the interests which I was bound to protect; but the noble lord informed those whom he addressed, that I was influenced by considerations of private paltry gain in advising the repeal of the corn laws. He founds his charge against me upon the assumption that my interests in funded property far exceeded that which I had in land. The noble lord had condescended, it appears, to make inquiry into my private circumstances, and undertook to inform those who were listening to him, that my property in land was only one-fourth of that which I had in the funds, and that, therefore, I had a direct pecuniary motive in advising the repeal of the corn laws. Sir, I am little disposed to deprecate any reference which the noble lord may think it consistent with his public duty to make to my private circumstances. I should have borne with much less equanimity the charges which have been brought against me, if I were not perfectly indifferent to inquiry and examination into any acts of mine, public or private, connected with my duty to the Crown. But this I have a right to require, that when the noble lord thinks it fitting to charge me with personal motives, and to found that charge upon allegations connected with my private fortune, I have a right to require from the noble lord that he will make some inquiry into the facts on which he relies, and that he will not prefer a charge upon an assumption which is utterly and totally erroneous. Sir, I shall not trouble the House with references to private matters; I shall only say, that if the noble lord had happened to state exactly the reverse of that which he did state with regard to my affairs, he would have been much nearer to the truth. The noble lord, however impolitic or unfaithful he may think my course to have been, must acquit me of any intention to derive personal gain from the course I pursued.

Before you denounce the conduct of a Minister of the Crown as treacherous, it would be but just to place yourselves in the situation in which that minister is placed, and to advert to the duties which devolve upon him. Sir, when I and those with

whom I acted—my valued friends and colleagues—determined that it was our duty to propose to the Legislature the removal of the duties upon food, we were threatened with a portentous and mysterious calamity. It was impossible for us to know to what extent that disorder which threatened the food of a very large portion of the people of Ireland, might go. We knew this—that in Ireland alone not less than 4,000,000 of men depended upon a single article of sustenance; we knew that on that article of sustenance no reliance could be placed. I must say, for one, that I felt it to be an imperative duty as a public man to take precautions, even if they should prove to be superfluous, against a calamity which might be fatal to the peace of the country, fatal to many thousands of lives. I believed that it would be injurious to the interests of the agricultural classes to witness the effects of disease and famine, and refuse to apply the natural remedy, namely, increased means of subsistence. I felt a strong persuasion, first, that the duties on the import of food ought to be suspended; and, secondly, that having been suspended, they could not, in the then state of public opinion and public feeling, be renewed—that the conflict for the revival of those duties, after their being once suspended, would be one which, even if successful, would not be for the real interest of those for whom it was undertaken. The noble lord at the head of the government had come to the same conclusion; the noble lord did not, I believe, intend to embarrass the government; but he had come to the same conclusion, that the duties upon corn ought to be suspended, and that after their suspension their revival would be impossible, at least impossible without a conflict which would be injurious to the interests of those for whose benefit protection was established. That was my sincere belief. I thought it my duty—a duty which I owed to God and to this country—if there were the chance of famine, to take the best precautions which could be taken, by suspending the duties upon food. I did conscientiously believe it would be most unwise to give a pledge, that after that suspension those duties should be renewed. I may have been mistaken; but if mistaken, could I have had any personal or political object in forfeiting your confidence, in relinquishing office, and in exposing myself to all the abuse and vituperation, much less galling than the loss of the friendship and confidence, of those with whom I had long acted? That loss I must submit to; but in submitting to it I declare that the interval that has passed has only confirmed my confidence in the prudence of the course which we adopted, and in the policy and justice of those commercial principles which were acted upon from 1842 to 1846, and to which the present government has, infinitely to my satisfaction, steadily and consistently adhered. Sir, I agree with the hon. gentleman that the land is the stable basis of the State. I should deplore the day when the land lost its legitimate influence. But that day will never come; the land always must, and will, retain its legitimate influence. Why, you are now proclaiming that if there were a dissolution to-morrow, and a general election, so predominant is the influence of the land, that a parliament would be returned which would again revive protection. I totally differ from you as to the probable result of that election. It is my firm belief that protection never will and never can be revived; but you convince me that you think that the just influence of land is not diminished, when you prophesy that it would return to parliament a majority pledged to protection. Sir, the lapse of years, the progress of public opinion, the changes of institutions and manners, greatly modify the causes which contribute to the influence of landed property. It would be impossible to reinvest the land now with the privileges which it possessed at the time when the feudal system was broken up; and yet the relative weight and influence of the land are not necessarily diminished. Our institutions have undergone change and modification, but their vital energies are unimpaired. Queen Victoria could not address the House of Commons in the tone in which Queen Elizabeth addressed it. She could not exercise prerogatives which, exercised by her predecessor, were not contested; but I doubt whether the real authority of Queen Victoria—although great prerogatives have been relinquished—the influence of affection, of attachment, of willing obedience—be not greater than any which was possessed by Queen Elizabeth. So it has been with the privileges of the aristocracy; so it has been with the privileges of the House of Commons. There was a time when he who fished in one of your fishponds could be apprehended, and punished for a breach of privilege. You made a wise concession of privileges revolting to public opinion; but has your influence abated? No, but it has been derived from other

sources. The willing abandonment of that which could not be justly maintained, was rewarded by an ample compensation in point of real power and honour. And so it is with the land. The forward retention of old customs, of old privileges, of unjust exemptions and advantages, would only undermine and not increase your force. A time had, in my opinion, arrived, when relinquishment of such things was more for your permanent advantage, more for the maintenance of your real authority, than a severe, even a successful, struggle for their retention. By relinquishing protection—by giving to the poor and the labouring classes the advantages of an unrestricted import of food—by doing this, cheerfully and voluntarily, when there was no immediate pressure of absolute necessity, no violence, no menaces, you secured ample compensation, in enhanced influence and authority, for that which you relinquished in abandoning protection. Your just influence cannot be diminished. It is founded on ancient prescription, on the nature of our institutions, on your own high character and conduct; and depend upon it, it will not be lessened because you have refused to derive a pecuniary advantage by increasing the price of food, and imposing duties upon the sustenance of the people. Your interests are inseparably interwoven with the general prosperity. It may be premature to speak of the results of that system of commercial policy you have adopted, but you are not entitled prematurely to condemn it. I am speaking at a moment when the exports of manufactured produce in the first year of free trade in corn have exceeded by ten millions the exports of the last year, during which you had a system of restriction. I am speaking at a time when there is general contentment and submission to the law, when crime has been diminished, when morality has increased. If you will not admit these to be the natural results of our commercial policy, at least you cannot deny that they have been concurrent with a greater command over all the necessities and comforts of life. I will not taunt the hon. gentleman with not bringing forward the question of protection; but I deeply deplore that there has not been, and that there appears not likely to be, an opportunity of testing by discussion the merits of that great question. I think it unfortunate that by some direct vote we cannot decide whether protection shall be revived or not. It would be important to set at rest the minds of the occupying tenants; it would be important that landlords should understand that it is by encouraging improvements, by the application of skill, by affording facilities to the exertions of their tenantry, that they must trust for the means to meet foreign competition. The hope of meeting it by renewed protection will prove to be delusive. If that question be brought forward, I should then state at length the grounds on which I adhere to the principles on which I acted in 1842, upon which I should implore you not to shake the confidence which has been reposed in the justice and wisdom of parliament, to look for the revival of agricultural prosperity by continuing the encouragement to industry, by increasing the demand for produce, by removing every remaining restriction on commerce, by leaving this great country, possessed as it is of natural advantages over every other country in the world—possessed of superior skill and capital, and every physical element of prosperity—I should implore you to trust to your superiority in all such advantages, and not seek, by protective duties and restrictions on commerce, to abate the motives for enterprise, and the inducements to perseverance and industry. These, Sir, are my opinions, acted upon while I was in power, and confirmed by all subsequent experience. To these opinions I adhere; and I earnestly hope that I may never live to see the day when the House of Commons shall retrace its steps.

Mr. Disraeli having replied, the House divided: Ayes, 252; Noes, 273; majority against the motion, 21.

## TAXATION OF THE COUNTRY.

MARCH 12, 1850.

Mr. Drummond, pursuant to notice, submitted the following motion:—"That whereas the present taxation of the country depresses all classes, and especially the labouring classes, by diminishing the funds for the employment of productive labour, it is the opinion of this House, that adequate means should be forthwith adopted to reduce the expenditure of the government."

SIR ROBERT PEEL would imitate the example of those who had preceded him, of briefly stating the general grounds upon which he should give his vote. The motion

of his hon. friend the member for West Surrey, might be considered either in a commercial or a financial point of view. The right hon. gentleman the secretary at war regarded it as meant to imply an opinion on the causes of commercial distress, and that his hon. friend really intended by this motion to call upon the House to imply an opinion unfavourable to the commercial policy they had pursued of late years. He had that confidence in the frankness and openness of his hon. friend, that he firmly believed that if his hon. friend had intended to ask the House of Commons to express an opinion on the principle of the commercial policy they had recently adopted, he would have so framed his resolution as to bring that great question to some clear issue, and not by the use of equivocal phrases have attempted to gain an advantage which he could not have gained if he had used direct and intelligible terms. Still less could he believe that his hon. friend really intended to imply an opinion unfavourable to the commercial policy which had been pursued, because he (Sir R. Peel) heard the other night his hon. friend declare that in his opinion, on the termination of the war, it would have been utterly impossible to maintain by legislation a price of food in England higher than that which was maintained on the continent; and his hon. friend had taken credit for his sagacity in having previously to 1815 publicly expressed his opinion that they could not, by artificial means, by legislation, raise the price of corn to a higher rate than that which could naturally be maintained. Again, he had heard an extract read from some document—a document put forth, he presumed, with his hon. friend's sanction—from which he (Sir R. Peel) inferred that, at no very remote period, the principles of free trade, or at least the abolition of legislative restrictions on the supply of food, had never had a more cordial, earnest, or persevering advocate than his hon. friend. Now, coupling these more recent declarations with that credit for sagacity to which his hon. friend laid claim, for having foreseen that on the termination of the war, the natural price of food as distinguished from an artificial one, must be the price of food in this country, he could not, he said, share in the suspicions of the right hon. gentleman the secretary at war, and believe that his hon. friend did really mean by equivocal phrases to gain any advantage, or imply any particular opinion on the commercial question. He took the premises of his hon. friend, and he thought that they justified his conclusions in favour of economy. But those premises equally vindicated the principles adopted in 1842, and subsequent years. There was hardly one of them that might not be justified on the premises of his hon. friend. His hon. friend said, "That whereas the present taxation of the country depresses all classes, and especially the labouring classes." Now surely the legitimate inference from that was, "that the House is of opinion that the House of Commons acted most wisely in 1842, and in subsequent years, in diminishing and repealing taxes which depressed all classes, and the labouring classes especially." Is not that a fair and legitimate inference from the premises? His hon. friend might justly encourage us to proceed in our course, might ask us to declare "that it will be desirable, as soon as revenue considerations may permit, to remove those other taxes which press heavily on the labouring classes of the community;" but he defied him from these premises to draw any such conclusion as this, for instance—"That this House is of opinion that it is desirable to revert to those principles of taxation which were in force before 1842, and to impose duties on the raw materials which furnish occupation for the industry of the labouring classes of the community." Still less would it be in the power of his hon. friend to draw any such conclusion as this from his premises—"That this House is of opinion that the taxes which were reduced or repealed in 1842 and subsequent years—namely, the duty on corn, meat, live animals, salt meat, cheese, and butter, should be restored to their former amount." It was utterly impossible for his hon. friend to draw that conclusion from his premises. No; that which his hon. friend meant to declare by his resolution was this, that the taxation that remained pressed heavily on the productive industry and comforts of the labouring classes; and that it was desirable that all practical economy should be introduced into the public expenditure, with the view of permitting a further reduction of that taxation. That he believed to be his hon. friend's motion—that he believed to be his hon. friend's view. He agreed with the hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Caley), that the merits of the commercial policy recently adopted must be mainly tested by the answer to this question—had the social condition of the labouring classes of this country been improved by the adoption of the principles of free trade? Had their comforts been increased? There

might have been in some cases a diminution in the nominal amount of wages received; but the question was, speaking of the labouring classes generally, had their command over the comforts and necessities of life been increased by the abolition of the legislative restrictions on the importation of food? And he rejoiced that the hon. gentleman said, and no doubt said truly, that if they could prove to him that the principles of free trade had really added to the comforts of the labouring classes, he would at once become a convert to free trade. The hon. gentleman thus freely admitted that that was the test by which the merits of this great question were to be determined, and that if the comforts of the labouring classes had been increased generally by their increased command over the necessities of life, or over those small luxuries, few enough, which were within their reach, no other consideration could prevail to justify the continuance of restriction. So far as they could place any reliance on documents, and so far as they could judge of the present administration of the poor-laws, of the number of unemployed poor, so far even as they could form a judgment in some of the rural districts, they had no right to infer that the comforts of the agricultural classes had been curtailed by the abolition of the corn-laws. In some parts of the country he was aware great distress prevailed; but the condition of the working classes was, as the hon. member had truly stated, the test by which the merits of the question must be decided. Now, speaking, not only of the working classes generally, but of the labourers employed in agriculture in particular, he doubted whether they were not at this moment, after the removal of protection, better provided with all that was essential to the comfort and enjoyment of humble life than they had been whilst protection existed. His hon. friend said that great distress existed amongst agriculturists at the present moment; but severe distress, and a corresponding demand for economy, had prevailed at other periods under a system of protection. In 1822, 1833, and 1836, and the winter of 1841, when protection existed, agricultural distress was most severely felt, and coincident with it was a loud demand for economy. His hon. friend would do well to consider whether the low prices of which he now complained—inasmuch as equally low prices had prevailed under a system of protection—ought to be attributed to the operation of free trade. In part, no doubt, they were attributable to that cause; but it had been conclusively shown, in previous discussions, that other causes, acting concurrently with the removal of protection, had made prices fall below their natural level. It was unnecessary to travel over the ground again, and to show that the prevalence of scarcity in 1845 and following years, throughout a great part of Europe, had given a stimulus to increased production, which might fairly account for the depression of which the agriculturists complained. His hon. friend insisted on having free trade in everything, and said that any person in this country should be allowed to grow tobacco if he chose. How that could benefit any class, he (Sir R. Peel) was unable to perceive. Surely his hon. friend did not intend to allow tobacco to be grown in this country free of duty, whilst a duty of 1200 per cent. continued to be levied on tobacco imported from abroad. He must of course mean that tobacco might be grown in this country subject to excise regulations, and liable to the same duty as that paid upon foreign tobacco. The hon. member said that he would have no favoured classes; but he would have a favoured class with a vengeance if he allowed tobacco to be grown in Wexford, and brought to market without payment of duty, whilst he taxed the tobacco grown in the southern states of the American Union to the amount of 1200 per cent. His hon. friend must, of course, intend to subject home-grown tobacco to a tax corresponding with the customs duty levied on the foreign article; and if he should succeed in prevailing upon the House to adopt his suggestion in this respect, it was hardly possible to estimate the small amount of benefit which the agricultural interest would derive from it. His hon. friend also insisted that the labourer should be permitted to grow his own hops, and corrected a mistake into which it appeared he (Sir R. Peel) had fallen in a former debate, in supposing that hops were gathered with the right hand; for it seemed the practice was for hop-pickers to hold the plant with the right hand, and collect the fruit with the left. His hon. friend lived in a hop county, and was charmed with the picturesque scene which would be presented by a labourer in a fantastic dress, on a delightful autumn evening, gathering untaxed hops to be applied to the manufacture of his own beer. His hon. friend sympathised with the unfortunate peasant who was prevented from applying his



own hops to the brewing of his own beer; but of what advantage would the removal of the restriction be in less favoured parts of the country than that in which his hon. friend resided? Take the weavers of Paisley or Lancashire, for example—would those men deem it to be an advantage to be allowed to gather untaxed hops on condition that they should consent to the reimposition of duties on food? What reception did his hon. friend imagine he would receive from these men if he were to say to them—"I will reimpose the duties on corn, bacon, cheese, butter, salted meats, and live animals; and, as a compensation, I offer you the permission to gather hops without legislative interference." The sympathy which his hon. friend felt for the labourers of Surrey and Kent in respect to their hops, was worthy of more extensive application. It should include within its benevolent range the labourers to whom the privilege of growing hops or tobacco was nothing—to whom the free access to the main articles of subsistence was everything. Giving his hon. friend full credit for a *bonâ fide* intention to recommend a resolution pledging the house to a course of economy, he (Sir R. Peel) came now to the consideration of that question. He was as strongly convinced as his hon. friend could be of the necessity of economy. He (Sir R. Peel) did not vote for the motion of the hon. member for the West Riding on a former evening, because he believed that the statement of facts set forth in it was not strictly correct. He did not vote for it, because he thought that the principle of reducing the expenditure of this year to the standard of any particular former year was a fallacious one, and that an attempt to carry it out would lead to great inconvenience. He could have no prepossession personally against the motion of the hon. member for the West Riding, because he (Sir R. Peel) was first lord of the treasury in 1835, when those low estimates were adopted which the hon. member would make the model of estimates for all future years. At the same time he could not but recollect that, when in opposition in 1838, he urged the government to increase the navy estimates, and that he then expressed the prevailing opinion of that part of the House which was unconnected with the government. It was also impossible for him to forget that, although the government over which he presided proposed reduced estimates in 1835, yet in 1845, when he was proposing, as first minister of the Crown, the re-enactment of the property-tax, and when he had every motive for reducing expenditure in order to conciliate the favour of the country towards the reimposition of the tax, he felt it his duty, looking to the circumstances of the country—to the vast extent of our colonial possessions—to the severe strain to which the physical strength of the soldier was subjected in consequence of the want of relief from colonial service, and to the danger of weakening his sympathies with the mother country, arising from too protracted a residence abroad, he felt it his duty to propose an increase of the army to the amount of 5,000 men. In both cases, however—in the reduction of 1835, as in the augmentation of 1845, he and his colleagues were influenced solely by considerations of public duty. Giving the hon. member for the West Riding credit for his lucid statement, and for suggesting many considerations well worthy of serious attention, nevertheless, for the reasons which he had stated, he could not concur in the conclusion to which the hon. member had come. The hon. member for the West Riding proposed to reduce £6,000,000 or £7,000,000 of expenditure, whilst his hon. friend the member for West Surrey specified no particular amount of reduction, but declared his opinion that "adequate means should be forthwith adopted to reduce the expenditure of the government." In that opinion he (Sir R. Peel) heartily concurred—no doubt adequate means should be adopted for that purpose; but past experience had taught him, that if the House of Commons was impressed with the necessity of retrenchment, the best course it could take for effecting that object was to proceed gradually, to consider details, and to make reductions where the government neglected its duty, rather than to put forth high-sounding declarations in favour of economy without pointing out any specific mode by which it could be accomplished. The House of Commons was very apt to have hot and cold fits as regarded economy. He had known the House at one time in favour, he would not say of lavish expenditure, but of a considerable relaxation of the national purse strings, and at another suddenly enforcing inconsiderate and precipitate retrenchment. In saying this, he was speaking of the reformed parliament. Neither the principles laid down nor the course pursued by the reformed parliament for several successive years, had tended to promote economy. This he knew, that the government with which he had been

connected, and other governments, had found great difficulty in preventing the House, when the hot fit happened to be on, from increasing the expenditure. It was his opinion, therefore, that systematic and progressive retrenchment was more likely to be effected by government—by a government inclined to retrench—than by the various and vacillating temper of the House of Commons. After what had passed during the last fortnight, the House of Commons would be placed in a peculiar position if it should adopt the motion now submitted to it, because by the passing of that motion it would justify the country in expecting that some vast retrenchment was about to be made. On what item of expenditure was such a retrenchment to take place? He was sorry to hear his hon. friend talk rather loosely about the preservation of public faith. Considering the name which his hon. friend bore—considering his connections, his position, and his high character, it was unworthy of him—and, in saying this, he meant to pay an unaffected compliment to his hon. friend—to countenance lax notions with respect to the imperative obligation of observing faith with the national creditor. His hon. friend said that he did not mean to violate public faith; but, then, what great department of expenditure did he mean to reduce? Reference had been made to the salaries of public officers; but the hon. member for Oxfordshire had given notice of his intention to renew his motion on that subject, and it would be better to leave the question to be discussed upon that occasion on its intrinsic merits, than to prejudice it by adopting a vague and general resolution now. It might be taken for granted that his hon. friend did not meditate an attack on the civil list; that he concurred in the opinion expressed the other night by the hon. member for the West Riding, that the civil list being the result of a solemn compact between the parliament and the Crown, ought not to be disturbed during the lifetime of the present sovereign. Did he then mean to hold out a hope that any great reduction of the military force could be made? At an early hour that very morning the House of Commons had resisted an attempt to reduce the effective force of the army below 99,128 men, by a majority of 223 to 50. At a later period of the day the House declared by a majority of 117 to 19, that it was necessary to maintain the whole naval force proposed by the government, namely, 39,000 seamen, and 11,000 marines. Now, those two votes involved the whole question of the expenditure necessary for the military and naval services, and therefore under neither of those heads could his hon. friend hope to effect any saving. This House also, on Friday last, rejected the motion of the hon. member for the West Riding, pledging the House to make a very large reduction in the general expenditure of the country, by a majority of 272 to 89. With what consistency could this House vote for a vague resolution in favour of retrenchment, after having so recently implied, or rather expressed, an opinion adverse to extensive reduction in any department civil or military? He (Sir R. Peel) was decidedly in favour of the policy and necessity of retrenchment. For what was said about the comparative lightness of taxation in this country, he cared nothing. There were many taxes pressing on the energies of the country and diminishing the comforts of the humbler classes, and their repeal, if it could be effected with good faith and public security, would be of inestimable advantage to the nation. Nay more, he would say that in time of peace, you must, if you meant to retrench in good earnest, incur some risks. If in time of peace you will have every garrison in every one of our colonial possessions in a state of complete efficiency—if you will have all our fortifications in every part of the world kept in a state of perfect repair, he ventured to say that no amount of annual revenue would be sufficient to meet such demands. If you adopt the opinions of military men, naturally anxious for the complete security of every assailable point, naturally anxious to throw upon you the whole responsibility for the loss, in the event of war suddenly breaking out, of some of our valuable possessions, you would overwhelm this country with taxes in time of peace. The government ought to feel assured that the House of Commons would support them if they incurred some responsibility with respect to our distant colonial possessions for the purpose of husbanding our resources in time of peace. *Bellum para si pacem velis*, was a maxim regarded by many as containing an incontestable truth. It was one, in his opinion, to be received with great caution, and admitting of much qualification. He did not mean to say that we ought to invite attack by being notoriously unprepared for defence. There were some important means of defence, such, for instance, as the ordnance

and navy, which could not suddenly be brought into action unless they were constantly maintained in a state of efficiency; but we should best consult the true interests of the country by husbanding our resources in a time of peace, and instead of a lavish expenditure on all the means of defence, by placing some trust in the latent and dormant energies of the nation, and acting upon the confidence that a just cause would rally a great and glorious people round the national standard, and enable us to defy the menaces of any foreign power. It was said the other night that reference must be had by us to the warlike preparations of foreign powers. That was true, but at the same time the conduct of foreign powers in maintaining enormous military establishments ought to be a warning as well as an example to us. Though the great military powers of the continent might be proud of their strength, and might cherish the belief that by means of their vast armaments they secured themselves against attack, yet the cost of those armaments was exhausting their resources, and enfeebling their capacity for exertion by preventing the possibility of economy. No greater benefit could be conferred on the human race, than if the great continental powers were to consent to maintain their relative position towards each other, while each reduced its army to an amount of force, the maintenance of which would not exhaust its strength, and undermine the foundations of its prosperity. If the time for a severe struggle should ever recur, the financial trial would be as severe as the physical one. If the governments of Russia, Prussia, France, and Austria would have the good sense, without any disturbance of the balance of their relative strength, each to forego a portion of the enormous expense incurred by maintaining vast armies, they would not diminish their national security, and would greatly contribute to the happiness of their people. The conduct of foreign powers must no doubt have a certain influence on our own course in respect to the maintenance of establishments; but he repeated there was a lesson of warning as well as of example. Those were his views with respect to the necessity of retrenchment. He would advise the House of Commons to apply itself to economy practically and consistently, and not to vote in the morning, by a majority of 223 to 50, for an army of 100,000; and 117 to 19, for a navy of 39,000 seamen, 11,000 marines, and 2,000 boys; and in the evening of the same day to pass a vague and general resolution, which will induce the country to believe that the House is about to carry out some great plan of retrenchment. He, for one, would not vote for a motion which must end in delusion. Agree to the resolution, and the House would be apt to say, "We have performed a great duty—we have come to a glorious resolution in favour of retrenchment—we may safely repose on our laurels, and neglect the somewhat troublesome and invidious duty of attending to economy in details."

Motion negatived.

#### SUPPLY—NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

JUNE 10, 1850.

House in Committee of Supply.—On the vote that £103,610 be granted for the new Houses of Parliament—Mr. Hume proposed as an amendment that the sum of £100,610 be inserted in place of the above amount.

SIR ROBERT PEELE said, he apprehended the practical question on which the hon. member for Montrose intended to take the opinion of the House was the vote of £3,000 which it was proposed to apply to the decoration of the two Houses. Before adverting to that topic, he wished to say a few words on that collateral point to which the hon. member devoted nine-tenths of his speech. The hon. member referred to an address made by Earl de Grey to Mr. Barry in presenting him, at the Institute of British Architects, with a medal, in admiration of his genius, and approbation of his conduct. He (Sir R. Peel) rejoiced that Earl de Grey had made that address—had taken the opportunity of recording the estimation in which Mr. Barry was held by the architects of this country. His noble friend did not act against the House of Commons or its recorded sentiments; but he had a perfect right to entertain his own opinions; and the House of Commons ought not to be so critical with respect to expressions of opinions. They were not exceedingly reserved themselves in expressing condemnation, and they ought not to be fastidious in objecting to the course pursued by any one who, on a fit and proper occasion, gave expression to his views. But his noble friend (Earl de Grey) might have found

in the report of 1844 an expression of opinion on the part of the House of Commons, that if there had been an alteration in the original plan, Mr. Barry was not responsible. In that report it was expressly stated that the committee, having examined various persons with respect to the course hitherto adopted by Mr. Barry in regard to alterations in the interior arrangements, imputed no blame to Mr. Barry, and declared that they "had every reason to believe all the alterations hitherto made had conduced to the convenience and general effect of the building." In 1844, then, there was a complete acquittal of Mr. Barry by that committee appointed by the House of Commons. Earl de Grey referred to various changes of opinion which had taken place, and said Mr. Barry had met with critics who did not understand their own mind. The hon. member for Montrose was one of the main suggesters of alterations; and, therefore he ought to be especially chary of impeaching Mr. Barry on the ground that alterations had been made. The evidence of the Earl of Bessborough, then first commissioner of woods and forests, referred to the original plan of Mr. Barry, and showed, if deviations had been made, and expenses incurred on account of them, that Mr. Barry was not responsible. But certain members of the House of Commons, thinking important alterations might be made for the more convenient accommodation of members, and the residence of persons connected with the House of Commons, suggested modifications of the original plan. The Earl of Bessborough said, the first deviation was providing a House for the sergeant-at-arms. Being asked if he could state when that was proposed, he replied, "During the sitting of the committees of both Houses which altered the plan of 1836. I can speak to that from a conversation I had with Mr. Hume." He (Sir R. Peel) read that evidence in vindication of Mr. Barry and of Earl de Grey, who, having expressed approbation of Mr. Barry, had incurred the censure of the hon. member for Montrose. He should have read it, if only to convince that hon. member that he ought to be tolerant of the opinions of others. A plan was offered by Mr. Barry, among other competitors, and adopted. [Mr. Hume: And altered.] It was altered in 1836, and again at the instance of the hon. member. From the Earl of Bessborough's evidence it appeared that the treasury consented reluctantly, and that the noble lord himself had objected in consistency with the advice of Sir R. Stephenson, who said, if they once consented to make alterations, more would be suggested. But who overruled that opinion? "I recollect," said the Earl of Bessborough, "Mr. Hume coming to me, and stating that it was absolutely necessary the sergeant-at-arms, who had charge of the House, and so had a great responsibility for so large a building, should have an apartment." Lord G. Somerset inquired in what character did Mr. Hume make such applications? The answer of the Earl of Bessborough was, that he made the applications as a member of the committee. Being asked if he acceded to the representation of the hon. member, the Earl of Bessborough replied, "I assented to it, but with very great reluctance. I got the consent of the treasury, but they objected very much." Here were these two reluctant departments consenting to new buildings and fresh expenditure, in consequence of the suggestion of the hon. member who now asked the House to curtail the vote for the new Houses of Parliament by £3,000. It might be questioned whether it would not have been better had the woods and forests resisted the fascinations of the hon. gentleman. When the Earl of Bessborough was asked whether Mr. Hume stated the suggestion as his own opinion or as that of the committee, the answer was that the hon. member described it as the general opinion. [Mr. Hume: Who was the chairman?] Who was the chairman? It was not, he believed, the hon. member for Montrose. Every precaution, however, was taken by the departments, and this question was asked, "Mr. Hume was not the chairman of the committee, was he?"—"No, he was not." That made the conduct of the hon. gentleman still more improper then. He was very sorry to make this exposure of the hon. member. He (Sir R. Peel) was anxious to have stated to the hon. member before he brought on his motion, in what a strait he was placed by his conduct with respect to this suggestion. The witness stated "he was not chairman of the committee, but I think he said that it was the opinion of the majority of the committee." [Mr. Hume: That's all very well.] If the hon. member denied it, he (Sir R. Peel) could only say that he was quoting from a parliamentary document, and it was quite sufficient to vindicate his noble friend Earl de Grey from any reflections upon his conduct, and to show that Mr. Barry ought not alone to bear the blame of these alterations. Some observations had been made with respect to

the inconvenience of divisions in the new House. He (Sir R. Peel) had a similar impression, that the mode of taking divisions in this House was more convenient. But Mr. Barry was not responsible, for the committee appointed in 1836 considered the principle on which the new House of Commons should be constructed, and they expressly recommended that the new House should not be so long as the present—in which he thought they made a mistake; the defect was its breadth relatively to its length. It would have been more desirable to afford accommodation in the centre of the House than in the gallery, and to have had its proportions more resembling those of the present House. But Mr. Barry for that was free from blame. He offered a plan, which was submitted to the committee, and the committee recommended that the House of Commons should be broader, and that the length should be curtailed. They expressly recommended an apartment on each side of the House of Commons in which divisions should be taken in the very matter Mr. Barry had provided. The House of Commons must, therefore, adopt the whole blame with respect to the construction of the New House. The right hon. gentleman the chancellor of the exchequer had acted prudently in proposing, before new alterations were made, or fresh expenses incurred, that there should be a committee of the most experienced members appointed with the view of ascertaining what alterations might be necessary. So much with respect to the House of Commons. As regarded the particular vote on which the hon. member for Montrose intended to take the opinion of the House, the House of Commons appeared to have a short memory in these matters. They thought they were going to revise an act of the Crown—to express disapprobation of the course pursued by the Crown with respect to both Houses of Parliament. The House was perfectly at liberty to do so. If they did not think the commission of the fine arts appointed by the Crown the proper tribunal to decide on the matters committed to its charge—if they thought the House of Commons should withdraw the vote altogether, they were perfectly at liberty to do so. If they thought all the great artists of the country—many of whom had been brought into prominence by the competition which took place under the auspices of the commission—ought to seek encouragement elsewhere; if they thought it necessary to mark their disapprobation of the delay which had taken place, or their anxiety to promote economy by withdrawing the grant, they were perfectly at liberty to adopt that proceeding. As a member of that commission, so far from deprecating such a step, he should be heartily glad to be relieved from the duties, particularly if it were intimated that the commission had not the confidence of the House. But no step had been taken by the executive government, or by that commission, except in the belief, and the justifiable confidence, that the commission and the government were acting in consonance with the views of the House of Commons. That commission was issued solely in consequence of an unanimous recommendation of a committee appointed to consider whether it was not fitting that the opportunity should be taken for constructing that magnificent building to promote the fine arts. He should feel it to be his duty to put it beyond all possibility of doubt, that the acts done had been so in consequence of the sanction and recommendation of the House of Commons. In 1841, during the government of Lord Melbourne, a committee was appointed on the 6th of May, to consider the promotion of the fine arts in this country, in connection with the rebuilding of the new Houses. That committee came to a unanimous report; and, strange again to say, one of the members of that committee, thus making a unanimous report, and compelling the government to undertake the consideration of the subject, was Mr. Hume. What did the committee recommend? They said they had examined several distinguished professors and admirers of art, who were unanimously of opinion that so important a national work afforded a fitting opportunity for encouraging, not only the higher, but every subordinate branch of the fine arts in this country; mouldings, design—in the most extensive signification of the term, the manufacture of ornaments in brasswork, &c. Everything relating to the fine arts was comprehended within the scope of the committee's recommendation. It was the House of Commons which recommended that a department of the government should be solely responsible for carrying out the measures which the committee's report contemplated. It was thought right to take a collective and united view of the whole question. The fine arts' commission thought they were acting in deference to the authority of that committee when they asked the treasury to intrust them with the expenditure of an annual

vote, in order that they might ascertain to what extent the ingenuity, talent, and industry of this country might be employed. The committee observed that doubts might be entertained with respect to the encouragement of fresco; some might think it a foreign taste; but the commission did not encourage fresco painting without their understanding that it was the wish of the House of Commons that that mode of painting should be tried. The committee observed that it had been lately revived on the continent, and tried, especially at Munich—that the subjects it was fitted to illustrate pointed it out for a national building as almost the only subject by which full effect could be given to the qualities which distinguished it of grandeur, breadth, and simplicity. The committee recommended that that style should be adopted, and not oil-painting only. It was the House of Commons which suggested the encouragement of a branch of art not unknown to this country in former times, but which had remained dormant for above a century; and that the artists of this country should be asked to compete in that novel department of art. Reflections might be cast on the selection made by the commission of eminent men whose effigies should adorn the new Houses, as well as of subjects illustrating the national history. But by making a selection of historical subjects, and of men distinguished in British annals, they thought, up to that night, that they were adopting the recommendations and acting in conformity with the wishes of the House of Commons; for the report of the committee concluded by observing that they unanimously recommended the evidence to the favourable consideration of the House, with the view of its receiving the immediate attention of the government. Such was the opinion of the House of Commons at that time—an opinion which the Crown was obliged to respect, because it referred to the decoration of the edifice appropriated to the House of Commons and the House of Peers. The report of the committee concluded by saying—"We humbly recommend the evidence herewith presented to the House to its favourable consideration, with a view to its receiving immediate attention at the hands of the government, in the hope that the new Houses of Parliament may hand down to posterity a memorial, as well of the genius of our artists as of the importance attached by the country to the nobler productions of art, and that subjects embodied in such representations, whether by painting or by sculpture, may serve to perpetuate the facts of our past history, and to preserve the memories of our public benefactors in the grateful remembrance of our people."

Supposing the Crown had neglected that recommendation of the House of Commons, had appointed no commission, had done nothing with reference to the declaration of the two Houses in promotion of art, would not the House of Commons have taken credit with artists and the lovers of art for a disposition to give them encouragement? Might the House of Commons not have said—"Here you have evidence of our disposition to provide the means, but the Crown, the natural patron of art, has done nothing in furtherance of this great national undertaking?" The Crown acted on the suggestion of the House of Commons. It appointed a commission. If that commission had abused the functions intrusted to them, that was a legitimate ground for refusing to assent to their proceedings. But the commission, on their own part, were not aware of any dereliction of duty which a sense of justice ought to make them acknowledge. They obtained a public competition; they gave prizes to the best works; without restriction as to any particular class of art, they opened a competition to the whole talent of the country. Three prizes were awarded of £500 each, three of £300 each, and three of £200 each. A commission was appointed to award those prizes and, greatly to the satisfaction of that commission, they were, in almost every instance, awarded to young men whose names had hardly been heard before. Latent genius was brought to light. These were the names of the successful candidates:—Mr. Pickersgill (not the royal academician), Mr. Watts, Mr. Armitage, each received prizes of £500; prizes of £300 were awarded to Mr. Frost, Mr. Poole, and another; prizes of £200 were awarded to Mr. Lauder, Mr. Lucy, and Mr. Foster. It could not be said that the opportunity had been thrown away for the encouragement of art, or that any favour had been shown in awarding the premiums; for he doubted whether the names of any of the successful artists had been known to those who awarded the premiums. The commission certainly thought they were acting in conformity with the wishes of the House of Commons when historical subjects were selected. A committee was appointed. The recommendations on that subject were offered by that committee, which was composed of the following members:—Prince

Albert, the Marquess of Lansdowne, Lord J. Russell, Lord Morpeth, Lord Mahon, Mr. Macaulay, Sir R. Inglis, Mr. Hallam, and Mr. Wyse. If the House thought that committee badly selected, and objected in any respect to the course taken in the matter, he did not deprecate their rescinding the vote, and withdrawing from the commission the power of encouraging art; but, in doing so he wished the House distinctly to understand that they were rescinding an act not of the Crown, but of the House of Commons, and withdrawing encouragement which the Crown had given, acting in compliance with the express wish of the House of Commons. He ought to inform the House—it might be an additional inducement to withdraw the vote—that the commission had proceeded in the confidence that, not only in this but in future years, the grant would be continued. They had selected an artist of the highest eminence, to whom they had given a commission to execute a series of works. [Mr. Osborne: In how many years?] He should be sorry to be charged with any concealment whatever. Mr. Herbert was the artist. They had selected him for the decoration of an apartment, the commission being given on the distinct understanding that he could only enter on it bearing in mind the precariousness of the tenure by which the commission held the grants. But, with reference to one particular apartment they thought that there would be an advantage in intrusting the decoration of it to one artist of eminence rather than to several hands; that more uniformity of design would be insured; that it was more in common with the practice of former ages to take that course; and they had invited Mr. Herbert to commence a series of paintings for that apartment. [Mr. Osborne: Which apartment?] He thought it was the Peers' robing-room. If any doubt existed of the merits and genius of Mr. Herbert, hon. members who had not had an opportunity of seeing it, ought to look at the magnificent fresco of King Lear, painted by him. The character brought out in the Cordelia, bending at the side, would attract particular attention; and hon. members might judge for themselves whether a better selection could have been made than of that artist. He did hope the House of Commons would be of opinion that it would not be creditable to the country, were the opportunity allowed to pass without affording what encouragement they could to art; that if they thought the commission had not taken a course calculated to encourage other departments of art as well as the highest, they would give the commission credit for anxiety to discharge its duties aright. If, on the other hand, the House thought the commission had abused its trust, had given encouragement to departments of art which it ought not to have encouraged; if they thought a committee of the House of Commons, and the House of Commons generally, would be a better tribunal for the consideration of these matters of taste, without murmur and without complaint, he, for one, would see the commission extinguished, and would only hope the House of Commons would appoint a better authority for the purpose of executing its purpose—if it were its purpose—to make this magnificent building conducive to the advancement of the fine arts.

Original vote agreed to.

### LORD-LIEUTENANCY ABOLITION (IRELAND) BILL.

JUNE 17, 1850.

The order of the day was read for resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment proposed to the question—"That this bill be now read a second time;" the amendment being to leave out the word "now," and at the end of the question to add the words—"upon this day six months."

SIR ROBERT PEEL: Sir, considering that this bill is brought forward by her Majesty's government, and that the undoubted object of it is to promote the good government of Ireland, it is entitled on these accounts to at least the most respectful consideration of this House. I consider the main question to be, will the arrangement proposed by the bill conduce to the good and satisfactory government of Ireland? All other considerations are, I apprehend, subordinate to that. The withdrawal of the lord-lieutenant from Ireland may or may not affect some local and partial interests, but still, if the result of the measure shall be to promote the end of good government in Ireland, all other considerations of partial and local injury are in my opinion to be regarded as subordinate. I wish I could see with the same confidence with which some gentlemen see the unequivocal advantages of this bill; but

I own that, while upon the whole I am perfectly willing to consent that the experiment should be made, I am bound, in giving that consent, to say that I do so with much hesitation and doubt as to the advantages which, in the estimation of many gentlemen, are likely to result from it. Of this I am confident, that if you are to have local authorities who, without the responsibility of the lord-lieutenant, will assume the executive functions of government, Ireland will derive no advantage whatever from the measure. I am quite aware of the difficulties which men, even of high character and great acquirements, have in administering the government of Ireland; but these difficulties are not, I apprehend, so much felt on account either of their personal qualities or on account of the constitution of the office of lord-lieutenant itself, as on account of difficulties inherent in the state of society in Ireland; which difficulties will, to a very considerable extent, continue to operate, even if this office is removed. I feel that there are some difficulties inherent in the constitution, as regards this matter. When there was a local parliament in Ireland, the relation of the chief-secretary to the lord-lieutenant was a national and constitutional relation. The chief-secretary was then in immediate connection with the lord-lieutenant. He stood in a subordinate capacity; all he did emanated from the authority of the lord-lieutenant, and his relation to him corresponded in all material respects to the relation in which a minister of state ordinarily stands with reference to the Crown. When you abolished the local legislature, and transferred the secretary's parliamentary functions to this side of the water, you altered materially the relations between the two parties. You put the office of secretary aside from that of the lord-lieutenant; you made him a minister responsible for the administration of justice in Ireland—a minister necessarily possessing great power, and exercising that power sometimes without communication with his chief, however desirous he might be of doing so. You thus placed him in a position in which it was very difficult for any man with the very best intentions to carry on the public business without the risk of occasional embarrassment. I speak from experience as to the difficulties that have resulted from the position in which the chief secretary stands with regard to the lord-lieutenant. At the same time, what may be the effect of removing from Dublin the authority of a nobleman of such high acquirements as the nobleman now administering the functions of lord-lieutenant in Ireland, and what encouragement it may give to the revival of local agitation and to the struggles of party, I cannot pretend to predict; but I certainly do not view without apprehension the risk, that if you are to have a local commander-in-chief, a local lord-chancellor, a separate bar, and altogether a separate administration of justice, the removal of an authority like that of the lord-lieutenant—acting independently, animated by a sincere desire to promote the welfare of the people, free from all local prejudices, and from all personal partialities—may be attended with an injurious effect. You have attempted to counteract and to remedy the difficulty that arises from this peculiar relation to the lord-lieutenant by giving to the secretary for Ireland necessary additional powers. You have occasionally found it necessary, or considered it necessary, to give to the chief-secretary the authority of a cabinet minister. That I conceive to be a most clumsy device for remedying a difficulty inherent in the constitution. It is a device not only disturbing the relations of a chief to his subordinate, but one positively inverting those relations. When you give to the chief-secretary all the authority of a cabinet minister, and leave the lord-lieutenant without that authority, you encourage the chief-secretary still more to assume for himself the exercise of independent powers. On that ground alone, then, from the difficulties that are experienced in maintaining the relations between these two authorities—there being at the same time grave objections to the remedy occasionally employed, that of conferring the dignity of a cabinet minister on the secretary—it is, in short, from a reference to the difficulties inherent in the constitution, and the employment of that occasional remedy, that I am inclined favourably to receive the proposal for an alteration in these arrangements. I am bound also, to admit, that the increased facilities of communication between the two countries gives increased means of conducting the government of Ireland without the intervention of a lord-lieutenant; and probably no period could be better selected than the present for making that experiment. But, then, I must say that that which will best reconcile me to the working of the experiment will be, that you have unity of system in the form of government which you are to substitute. I did express strong doubts—not in 1846, as the hon. and gallant



member for Portarlington stated the other night—but in 1844—I then stated the apprehensions which I felt as to the result of the appointment of a fourth secretary of state for the administration of Irish affairs; and I am bound to say that those apprehensions have continued till now. The advantages compensating for other risks and inconveniences are, in my opinion, a system of unity—a system of unity of legislation, so far as legislation can be uniform, respecting two countries like England and Ireland, and unity in the way of appointing one man to administer the whole affairs of the secretary of state. If you have two secretaries of state for exercising the same, or nearly the same, duties, the question must arise, whether you are not forfeiting a great part of the advantage you hope to obtain from the extinction of the high office of lord-lieutenant. You are, in fact, by this proposal, receding from the principle on which you acted in 1816. In that year you found the advantage of consolidating the two exchequers, and you resolved that the financial arrangements of the two countries would be better carried on by abolishing entirely the office of the Irish chancellor of the exchequer, and vesting the whole functions of the office in the English chancellor of the exchequer. Every argument that could apply to that case will be equally applicable to the administration of justice and the exercise of the executive functions. If you are to have two secretaries of state, I earnestly entreat you to consider the nature of such an arrangement as this—to put Wales and Scotland under one of them, and England and Ireland under the other. [Laughter.] You laugh at the idea of such an arrangement, but there is no reason why you should laugh at a proposal of that kind any more than at a proposal for giving one secretary to Ireland, and another secretary for the rest of the kingdom. There might be good reason for separating Scotland from England in this respect, for there a separate system of law and administration exists; but I really do think that it would be a better arrangement to have Wales and Scotland under one secretary, and England and Ireland under another, than to make the distinction you propose by this bill. If you are to have an officer residing in England, and occasionally perhaps in Ireland, with all the authority of the lord-lieutenant, then I must say I foresee more chances of differences of opinion with regard to the administration of affairs in Ireland than at present exist. If the times be tranquil, and no danger of popular commotion arise, then the Irish secretary of state may very easily administer the affairs of the government, so far as the employment of the soldiery in connection with the civil power is concerned; but suppose there may be serious troubles in Scotland, and disturbances also in England and Wales, and at the same time popular outbreaks in Ireland, will it not be of the highest advantage to have one civil officer who has to communicate with the commander of the forces in order effectually to suppress the outrages that have arisen—to have one man ready to deal with the exigencies of every part of the empire, than to have two men both responsible for the maintenance of the public peace, and holding, it may be, different and conflicting views on a matter of such importance as the restoration of the public peace through the application of military force? But when you say the secretary of state is overwhelmed with public business, and that it is necessary to appoint an additional secretary, my experience rather tends to show that the conflict of power and of co-equal authority adds to the difficulty of disposing of public business. If I am to take no step, to direct no regiment to be sent to Wales without communicating with my brother secretary, who is pressing also at the same time for that same regiment to be sent elsewhere, you give me no relief in the execution of my functions; because before I give my order I must have the assent of another man, possessed of the same responsibility as myself, and wishing to have the same assistance. Now, with respect to unity of legislation. We all know that it is of the utmost advantage that our Irish legislation should, as nearly as possible, conform in principle and in details with our legislation for England. It is easy to say that; but when we come to the practical application of the principle, how many difficulties do we not find in the way? Must the one secretary, before he proceeds to legislate, hold frequent communications with his brother secretary on those points that are to form the groundwork of proceeding for that part of the kingdom under his jurisdiction? If, on the other hand, there is to be no such communication—if one is to legislate for Ireland, and the other for the rest of the empire, without communication, then you undergo the risk of causing such material differences as must disturb the harmony of the whole. I assume there will be communication between the secretaries; and I only say, that however pressing the amount

of business might be, I would rather be responsible for the whole of the legislation of the country than for all the unsatisfactory details which would be inevitable under such a system. With respect to the administration of criminal justice in Ireland, if there be a separate secretary of state for that country, what will be the consequence? There will be communications carried on by the judges and by the attorney-general and solicitor-general with the secretary of state, and thus you will be keeping up a distinction in the Irish administration of justice, which it is your object to avoid. Whereas, if there were but one secretary of state for the United Empire, who should be responsible for the advice given to the Crown in respect to the exercise of the prerogative of mercy for all parts of the United Kingdom, my opinion is, that the burden it would cast on the shoulders of that one secretary, would not be more onerous than it is at present, while the satisfaction it would give would be much greater, from the conviction which the people of Ireland would feel, that the same principle in the administration of the law, and in the exercise of the prerogative of mercy, was applied to all parts of the kingdom. I do not wish to deny the fact as to the extent of the business which presses upon the ministers; and there is no effort I would not make to relieve the secretary of state for the home department from many of the functions which he now performs, in order to make him responsible for the administration of the criminal law both in England and in Ireland. For instance, if it be true that the superintending the administration of the criminal law be too heavy a duty for the secretary of state to perform, why not, if you are going to alter the constitution of the office of lord-chancellor, by appointing two judges to discharge the duties which the lord-chancellor now performs—why not transfer the administration of the details of criminal justice to those new officers, in order that the secretary of state might be able to apply his undivided attention to legislation for the United Empire, and to the duties of the executive government? Depend upon it, if you make the change proposed by this bill, what you will want in Ireland will be the moral influence of a man of the highest authority. I consider that authority will be much higher if it be exercised by the secretary of state for the home department, possessed of all the authority which the crown can confer upon him for the administration of the whole connected affairs of the United Empire. That authority will be much greater than if you constitute a distinct secretary of state for administering those separate functions in one part only of the United Kingdom. But I do not at present understand how it is proposed that the secretary of state is to discharge his duties. Is he to be resident in Ireland during that period of the year when his parliamentary duties may not require his presence in England? and, if he be resident in Ireland, will he have full power, which a secretary of state ought to have in times of emergency, of acting, not only with formal authority, but with a known, patent, and unquestioned authority, which free access to the sovereign necessarily confers? Will he be enabled to suggest the Queen's command as the ground for those acts of authority he may at any time exercise? But, if he be resident in Ireland, I don't see why the objection which has been made to the applications, that are frequently forwarded by the magistrates of Ireland to the lord-lieutenant for advice in the execution of their magisterial duties, should not be equally applicable to the case of the secretary of state, to whom, no doubt, the magistrate would be as ready to apply for advice as to the lord-lieutenant. If, however, the new secretary of state is to reside in this country, then I do not see why you should not make the experiment you are now about to make, by calling upon the present secretary of state for the home department to perform these united functions. I recollect, during the late war, that all the functions, and the whole of the administration of colonial and foreign affairs, were performed by one secretary of state. If the right hon. gentleman who now holds the office of secretary for the home department would only say, "I will undertake to perform the Irish as well as the English affairs, only give me a proper number of subordinates," my opinion is he would find it perfectly practicable to accomplish the object desired. If he would take upon himself the sole control over the administration of criminal justice, and over the legislation of that branch of the government, he may depend upon it he would not have a greater demand upon his time, than he would have if he were united with an Irish colleague who would be constantly telling him, what all Irish members were ever telling us, that Englishmen knew nothing about Ireland; that no Englishman is at all fit to govern that country. It is true, when Irishmen came

over here they heard Englishmen talk of certain principles of justice and of equity, and so forth; but still no Englishman could understand the mystery of Irish society. This Irish secretary would no doubt be followed by many of his Irish friends in this House; and the right hon. gentleman would soon find the Irish secretary, co-ordinate and co-equal with himself, a very disagreeable colleague, and one not likely to relieve him from the burden of any portion of that business, the discharge of which was the cause of great anxiety and uneasiness of mind to him, on whom the responsibility of that department of the executive government devolved. I therefore most honestly and earnestly advise the right hon. gentleman to take the administration of those functions upon himself, even though he should have another 10th of April to contend with. For it is of importance that the same mind which has to guard against any dangers that may threaten this metropolis, should be equally called upon to take into consideration, whether similar arrangements would be necessary in the event of the city of Dublin, or any other part of the United Kingdom, being in danger of having its peace disturbed. A command of time, and less of change, an unity of system, and a prospect of inspiring confidence, besides the facilities for conducting a joint administration of affairs, are in my opinion advantages infinitely more likely to be enjoyed if the functions of this department are exercised by one secretary of state, than if the duties should be performed by two. I wish to destroy the impression which appears always to rest in the minds of Irish gentlemen, that it is necessary for them constantly to refer to government for advice. I wish them also to see, that the proposal for transferring a portion of the authority now held by the lord-lieutenant to the municipal corporations, would not at all solve the difficulty. It may be quite right, for aught I know, to transfer some of those powers to the corporations; and considering that the successful result of the exercise of the municipal authority in the city of Dublin has been so great, it may be the opinion of hon. gentlemen that by increasing their powers, we should be increasing the benefits arising from their exercise. Still I do not apprehend that any increased powers given to the municipalities of Ireland would solve the difficulty created by taking away the government of the lord-lieutenant. Let the corporations have additional powers, if it be necessary, but that is a separate question altogether; and let it therefore stand upon its own independent merits. Giving increased authority to the municipalities will not assist either one secretary or two secretaries in determining the principles of legislation, or aid them in conducting the ordinary affairs of government. I do not, however, view with complete freedom from uneasiness and anxiety the change you are contemplating. I will not stop to consider some questions which have been suggested in the course of the debate; but this I will say, that if you think the city of Dublin is likely to be injuriously affected by the loss of the lord-lieutenant, I am of opinion that we shall be bound to consider, equitably and liberally, the claim which Dublin may have for compensation. I do not mean a claim in the shape of a grant, but a general claim; without pretending precisely to say what pecuniary compensation it should be. I do not entirely agree with the noble lord in the opinion that all the sums which have hitherto been spent in Dublin would henceforth return to the different localities and be expended there. I am rather afraid that a single court with increased splendour—for the splendour of the British court, splendid as it now is, would undoubtedly be increased, and would be adorned by Irish gentlemen and Irish ladies—would have a tendency to increase absenteeism; and that it would not be to the counties of Ireland that the benefit would accrue, but rather to England, by a concentration of society in this country. However, I am prepared to incur that risk; but that which I shall ask as a compensation for the risk I am willing to incur is, that we shall so make our arrangements for the legislation and government of Ireland, as shall insure as much uniformity and as much unity as it is possible for legislation to effect.

The House divided on the question that the word "now" stand part of the question: Ayes, 295; Noes, 70; majority, 225. Bill read a second time.

## **AFFAIRS OF GREECE.**

JUNE 28, 1850.

Mr. Roebuck, at the conclusion of a very able speech, in which he reviewed the foreign policy of the government, informed the House that in consequence of the

resolution passed by the House of Lords, condemning that policy, he would submit the following motion, in order that that House might express an opinion upon the same point as that on which the House of Lords had decided. The hon. and learned gentleman then moved:—"That the principles on which the foreign policy of her Majesty's government has been regulated, have been such as were calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country; and, in times of unexampled difficulty, to preserve peace between England and the various nations of the world."

SIR ROBERT PEEL (on the fourth night of the debate) spoke as follows:—Mr. Speaker, however extended in point of duration the debate has been, and however exhausted the topics that have been introduced into the discussion, I think the House will admit that I should not be acting in conformity with a sense of duty, if I abstained from assigning the grounds on which my vote will be given. The hon. and learned gentleman, the member for Southampton, has demanded a full explanation of the circumstances under which that vote will be given. Sir, he shall have that explanation. I have no reserve. The hon. and learned member has stated that there is a dishonourable conspiracy formed against her Majesty's government. Sir, a more unfounded charge never was preferred. He presumes that there has been some base compromise between gentlemen sitting on this side of the House, but holding different opinions upon matters of vital interest. He is wholly mistaken. There has been no such compromise. He talks of there being three courses to pursue; he tells us there are three combinations by which office may be obtained. He says, "I demand to know which of these three courses you contemplate." Now, is it not possible for the hon. and learned gentleman to suppose that there may be a fourth? Is it not possible for him to speculate upon the possibility that men in this House may intend to give their votes without reference to political combinations? Does he exclude the possibility of that fourth course of action, which arises from a conscientious conviction as to the truth? Is that excluded from his contemplation? May it not be possible that men cannot subscribe to a resolution which asserts that a certain course has been best calculated to preserve peace and to support the honour and dignity of this country? Is it not possible that, without reference to party or personal interests, men may decline to affirm a resolution which deals with principles of greater importance to the welfare of this country, for good or for evil, than have ever been under the consideration of the House? Sir, I will not forget, and I need not remind the House, that I have given, or attempted to give, to her Majesty's government my support—I will say my cordial support—during the last four years. In utter oblivion of the circumstances under which they succeeded to power, I have felt it my duty to give them not an ostentatious, but, because it was not ostentatious, a not the less effective support. I have not the honour and advantage of possessing their personal friendship; I have never been in political connection with them. I have held no communication with them during the last four years which may not be had by any member of this House, who may be the most independent and the most unconnected with their policy. I have given them my support, because I cordially approved of the policy which they carried into domestic affairs. I think that their policy in domestic affairs has been a liberal and conservative policy. I have agreed with them, and I repeat it now, with respect to the principle of commercial freedom. So far, from a base compromise having taken place between myself and the gentlemen who sit near me, and whose confidence I have had the misfortune to forfeit, every day that passes convinces me more and more that upon the cordial adoption of, and the unequivocal adhesion to, those principles of commercial policy, the peace and true interests of this country depend. I have said enough, I hope, to prove to the hon. and learned member, that for myself, as I know, and for others, as I believe, there has been none of that base compromise that he supposes has dictated our unanimity upon this occasion. I feel as grateful to her Majesty's government as one public man can feel to others, for the maintenance of those principles which regulate the monetary affairs of this country. I concur with them as to their Irish policy. I have not forgotten the declaration I made with respect to Ireland on the day upon which I quitted office, and I retain the opinion which I then expressed, that your true policy towards Ireland is to maintain civil equality as the privilege of all her Majesty's subjects, and not to permit religious differences of opinion to constitute a disqualification for the favour of the Crown. It is because I concur with them as to the general principles

of their policy that I, agreeing with them in their commercial legislation, and agreeing with them, as I have said, in the general outlines of their policy (I do not speak of the particular opinions which they may entertain, but only of the legislative measures produced by them with reference to the internal circumstances of the country), have been able, speaking generally, to give to their measures my support. I laugh to scorn the imputation that I have some connection with foreign conspirators. I believe of others, and I know of myself, that I repudiate any dictation from any person who is not immediately connected with the interests of my own country. I utterly disbelieve the existence of any such conspiracy. With respect to the combination of political opponents, of course in the conduct of party there must be concert and combination in the interest and movements of party. I speak not of this concert with the slightest disrespect; but I may say for myself, as the hon. and learned member demands the full truth, that so little have I been a party to any such combination, that I never saw the resolution submitted by the noble lord in the other House, and voted by the Lords, until I read it in the newspapers. I knew as little of the concoction, and was concerned as little with the proposal of this resolution, as the noble lord against whom it was directed. I do not labour, therefore, under any influence which can prevent me from giving a fair and dispassionate consideration to the resolution proposed by the hon. and learned member for Sheffield. It is said, however, that after four years' patient endurance—after four years' neutrality and silence—I and others have come forward to condemn the conduct of the government. Sir, I have come forward with no condemnation of the government. The hon. and learned gentleman the member for Sheffield demands from me to acquiesce in a declaration of positive approbation; and not only that, but he demands from me the assertion of principles, the consideration of which is tenfold more important than the saving of a ministry can be. Sir, there have been—and I will not forget it on this occasion—there have been occasions on which I have supported the foreign policy of her Majesty's government. I supported it with respect to Portugal. I did not concur in the vote of censure with regard to the policy of her Majesty's government in Spain, because I thought it would be unjust to Sir Henry Bulwer, and would be too severe a visitation for any offence which her Majesty's government and the noble lord the foreign secretary had committed. But I took the occasion of expressing my regret, that the tone assumed by the noble lord the secretary for foreign affairs towards Spain, was not calculated to conciliate the good-will of the people of that country. Sir, the most important point in the foreign policy of her Majesty's government I concurred in. I agreed with them in the recognition of the French Republic, and as to the policy of recognising the government which appeared to be most conformable to the will of the French people. I go further, and say that I think such a recognition ought not to be a cold reluctant acquiescence in an unavoidable necessity. I believe that, without reference to the constitution of the government, the true policy is to maintain friendly relations with that great people on the other side of the channel—to cultivate a good understanding with them—to show a disposition to place confidence in them. And it is because I concur in that policy—because I am favourable to the cultivation of a good understanding with France, that I now ask you, the government, to give an account of your French relations, and to tell me how it is that such a correspondence has taken place as that which is laid upon the table of the House; and why it is that you have had these altercations with the people of France, who have shown a disposition to place in you a cordial and unlimited confidence. The hon. and learned gentleman the member for Sheffield moves a resolution, the effect of which is to express approbation of the principles on which the foreign policy of her Majesty's government has been conducted, and to approve of their past administration. The hon. and learned gentleman, however, has admitted some latitude in expressing that approval. He has omitted from this resolution the word “best,” and has confined himself to the simple affirmation that they have conducted foreign affairs in such a way as to conduce to the honour and dignity of the country. I must say that I very much dislike professions of political faith. I very much dislike subscribing to certain articles which are laid down in order to cover a censure passed in the other House of Parliament. I am called upon to subscribe to the principles which have regulated the foreign diplomacy of her Majesty's government. Is it too much to ask the hon. and learned gentleman to define, before he asks me to subscribe those

articles, what they really are? Are they non-intervention? Are they the positive assertion of claims brought forward against a weak government, and the employment of language not held towards the strong and powerful? Are these the principles which the hon. and learned gentleman asks us to agree to? or does he say, "Subscribe to the articles which I have framed, and I will leave you to collect from the past, and from certain principles that have been enforced, what those principles are of which I ask your approval?" But that is a very vague and unsatisfactory definition of the articles of political faith which I am called upon to subscribe. The hon. and learned gentleman did not confine his range of observation to recent political history. He went from 1789 to 1815, and then took the period from 1815 to 1830. In 1830, he said, there dawned upon us the certain commencement of a happier era in our foreign policy; and this happier period was the recognition of the dynasty of Orleans on the throne of France. But my noble friend the Earl of Aberdeen was secretary of state for foreign affairs at that time. We announced in the speech from the Throne that the elder branch of the house of Bourbon had ceased to reign, and, seeing that the new sovereignty met with the general concurrence of the French people, we gave the new sovereign a cordial recognition, and attempted as far as was in our power to lay the foundations of lasting peace. But the period chosen by the hon. and learned gentleman extends to 1830; and is that a period from which I am to collect what the principles are I am called upon to approve? I apprehend not. I apprehend it would be no answer to the vote of the House of Lords, to pass a panegyric on the principles that characterised the foreign policy of this country twenty years ago. I am asked to express approbation of the foreign policy of the present government, as distinguished from the policy of its predecessors. [Lord J. Russell: It is not necessary.] Well, then, how will you get over the censure of the House of Lords? I thought it possible to place another construction on the motion of the hon. and learned member; but the declaration of the noble lord at the head of the government removed all doubts from my mind. It was the noble lord who said, upon the first night on which reference was made in this House to the answer of the House of Lords, that his noble friend the secretary for foreign affairs would not be the minister of Austria, would not be the minister of Russia, and would not be the minister of France, but would be the minister of England. What was the meaning of that declaration? The noble lord has too much prudence and discretion to point a sarcasm against three of the greatest powers of Europe; but he could afford to be very liberal with such weapons when directed against his predecessors. My construction of that passage was, that the noble lord meant to contrast the conduct of the noble lord the member for Tiverton with the conduct of the Earl of Aberdeen, and that which he solicited from me by my vote of this night was a decided reflection on the policy of the Earl of Aberdeen—upon the policy for which I myself was responsible. I have been connected with my noble friend the Earl of Aberdeen during the whole period for which he was secretary of state for foreign affairs; I was connected with him at the period when we announced that we recognised the house of Orleans, and that we were determined to maintain the most friendly relations with France. I remained connected with him until July, 1846, when, in surrendering power at the feet of a majority of this House, I announced the termination of the only difference that remained with the United States, by the adjustment of the affair of Oregon. I do not look back upon my connection with my noble friend with any other feelings than those of cordial satisfaction. I believe there never existed a minister less disposed to make a sacrifice either of the honour or the interests of this country, or more sincerely disposed to maintain not only peace, but the most friendly relations with every country with which England had intercourse. I never understood that this House had disapproved of the policy of my noble friend. I never understood this House to convey any intimation that it thought that, in the attempt to maintain peace, he showed a disposition to sacrifice either the honour or the interests of England. I do recollect that the maintenance of peace was often most difficult—that we had to soothe an excited state of the public mind in France; and I must say that it was the good fortune of England, of France, and of the world, that at that critical period of our history this country was not involved in war, on account of the most stupid and frivolous cause of war that ever existed, namely, the expulsion of Mr. Pritchard from Tahiti. Perhaps the House will recollect that a great party in France took its

name from Mr. Pritchard, and that at last the name of Pritchardites or Pritchardists was assigned to a large party which supported the absurd war-cry of France at that time; and I will do justice to a fallen minister, M. Guizot, to declare my belief that it was mainly owing to his courage, to his resolution, to his determination to resist the war-cry in France, that we were enabled to avert the calamities of war. Well, Sir, we had difficulties to contend with in maintaining the course we pursued. We were charged by the noble lord opposite with making Ashburton capitulations—that we were yielding to all those great powers with which we came in contact; but the result was, that the House of Commons did not share in the apprehensions of the noble lord, and our policy met with your most cordial approbation. I may say that, separated as I am from those with whom I had once the good fortune to act, that separation has not made me forgetful of the generous and cordial support which the foreign policy of my noble friend obtained from others. In justice to ourselves—in justice to the party with whom I then acted—in justice to this House, I could not with honour acquiesce in any covert reflection on the policy of my noble friend—the policy of peace, consistent with our maintenance of the honour of the country. The resolution of the hon. and learned gentleman embraces two objects—the protection of the government, and the declaration of the public principles he calls upon you to affirm—namely, that the course pursued by the government is one calculated to maintain the dignity and honour of England. I wish I could give it my support. It would be more agreeable to my private feelings. It would be more in consistency with my disposition to support her Majesty's government if I could do so; but to speak of that particular affair which led to the vote of the House of Lords, the conduct of government in reference to the Greek affair, I cannot, consistently with my conscientious convictions, declare that I think the course which the government has pursued is the course best calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country, or to maintain peace with foreign nations. Now, I take a somewhat peculiar view of that case. I am no partisan of Greece or the Greek government. I am disgusted with their evasions and their delays. I have had experience of them. I know how impossible it was to procure from them redress, or even satisfaction. I have had occasion—at least my noble friend (the Earl of Aberdeen) had occasion, to express to them our deep dissatisfaction with that course which they pursued. The noble lord the secretary for foreign affairs read a letter which was addressed by my noble friend to the government of Greece, and he made much of that letter, and contrasted it with his own; but we were perfectly authorised in making that communication to the Greek government, because we had the misfortune to stand in the position of a creditor; of a creditor who received no money, and could get no satisfaction. We were entitled to an annual payment along with two other powers. Our remonstrances were addressed in vain to the debtor. When we saw the government of that country removing from office men of the highest character, and appointing others subject to grievous imputations, I think that a creditor thus deprived of his money, or the prospect of obtaining it, was justified in holding pretty strong language of warning and remonstrance to those, who were making appointments which still more clouded the prospects of any ultimate settlement. The noble lord read that letter with great emphasis, and contrasted it with a letter he had written to our minister at Madrid. He said, “See the course you have pursued; you have absolutely addressed a communication to be made directly to the sovereign, whereas I, more cautious, more conciliatory, addressed my letter to the minister of England residing at Madrid.” In the letter of the noble lord I find him state that—“Her Majesty's government are so sensible of the inconvenience of interfering, even by friendly advice, in the internal affairs of independent States, that I have to abstain from giving you instructions to make any representations whatever to the Spanish ministers on these matters.”

And then the noble lord said—and it was received with general acclamations—“Contrast my conduct with that of the Earl of Aberdeen, who directs his remonstrances directly to the sovereign, whereas I would not approach even the minister with the language of remonstrance.” Then he charged my right hon. friend the member for Ripon with having suppressed a passage of this letter that would have borne testimony to the great merits of the noble lord. I am disposed to blame my right hon. friend for suppressing that passage, because it contains this instruction to the minister:—“Though you will of course take care to express on no occasion, on these subjects, sentiments different from those which I have thus explained to you,

and although you will be careful not to express those sentiments in any manner or upon any occasion so as to be likely to create, increase, or encourage discontent, yet you need not conceal from any of those persons who may have the power of remedying the existing evil, the fact that such opinions are entertained by the British government."

Now, I confess, for the purpose of avoiding embarrassment, I would rather make such communications direct to the minister or the sovereign of another country, than tell the ambassador to withhold certain things from them, but to have no scruple whatever in communicating the views of the British government to those who are in direct opposition to the sovereign or minister. Spain had been divided into two parties—the despotic party and the constitutional party. The views of the British government were to be communicated to that party who the noble lord believed had the power of remedying the existing evils under which Spain suffered, but were to be withheld from the ministers and the sovereign. But I was speaking of the government of Greece. I will admit you had just claims upon Greece; I will admit that the birth or religion of M. Pacífico constitutes no reason why he should not have the same title to indemnity as the highest noble, or a British subject of the highest rank. I admit that the meanness of his residence is not to be cited as a reason for withholding from him commiseration or redress; but I conceive there was an obvious mode of settling his claims without offending France, and without provoking a rebuke from Russia. My belief is that, without any compromise of your own dignity, you might have got the whole money you demanded, and avoided the difficulties in which you have involved yourselves with those powers. With regard to Russia, you had just asserted the authority of England by remonstrating with her for attempting to expel the refugees from Turkey. She acquiesced in your demands; and, with regard to France, you had all but the certainty of obtaining her cordial sympathy and good feeling. There never was a period in which it was more the interest of this country to conciliate the good feeling of Russia and France. France was weak, and the prey of intestine divisions; you could have made concessions to her then without incurring any suspicion of weakness on your part; and that conciliatory conduct towards France in the hour of her weakness, arising from intestine divisions, would have been rewarded with her permanent gratitude in the day of her strength. I can quite understand how you could have addressed France and Russia in such terms as these: "We have claims upon Greece—you are co-guaranteeing powers; the law of nations would enable us to proceed at once to obtain summary redress; but we will not send fifteen sail of the line to threaten Greece with the interruption of her commerce till we have invoked your good offices, and attempted to settle these claims of ours by arbitration." Why not have said, "There may be limits to delay; your friendly arbitration may fail; we are determined not to abandon our claims—insults have been offered, for which we must demand an apology; but we have pecuniary claims, that we will not insist upon by force, till we have applied for your good offices?" You may quote instances in which the United States have attacked Portugal, and in which France has sent fleets to Naples; but the policy of England should be to set the example of a different course of action, so far as you can set it without the compromise of your own honour. I admit you may have had the right. It is possible that you had authority to enforce your demand by the law of nations, without referring them to the consideration of any other power; but, if every country will have recourse to force to obtain its rights, there is no guarantee for the peace of Europe for a single day. I do not deny your right; but I say that every consideration of policy, in the peculiar circumstances in which you stood with regard to France and Russia—Russia having acquiesced in your demands for the withdrawal of her requisition for the expulsion of the Hungarian refugees from Turkey, and France having shown every disposition to confide in you and act cordially with you, there was every motive at that time why you should have exerted every effort to settle the matter through their good offices before you resorted to force. You did not object to the good offices of France—you accepted them when they were tendered—but why not invite them? Why not ask the good offices of France to assist in the adjustment of the affair? My belief is, that you would have effected that adjustment, have gained the good-will of Russia and of France, and have avoided giving offence to Greece; above all, you would have avoided those rebukes which were administered to you by Russia and France, and which I cannot



read without pain; and having read which, I cannot vote for a resolution which declares that the course which you have pursued in your foreign policy is calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country. I don't blame you for your ultimate concessions to France, or for your not having resisted the demand made of you by France, but don't ask me to concur in a vote of positive approbation of the course you have pursued. But I do blame you for your conduct towards France after you had accepted their good offices. I see no reason whatsoever for the course you pursued; and I think it was easy to foresee that it would involve you in the difficulty in which it did. I read the letters of M. Drouyn de Lhuys and General Lahitte, and I never saw letters containing more positive evidence of what were the real wishes and intentions of France in tendering to you her "good offices." There is something touching in the appeal which that great power made to you. She reproaches you for having resorted to force, and says to you, "You have alarmed every other country in Europe by sending fifteen sail of the line to the Piræus to insist upon these demands. Accept our good offices; by your doing so, you will assist us in our internal affairs." Now, what is the motion? What did the hon. and learned gentleman tell us, in language which I wish he had forbore to use? He said that France had become a vassal of Russia? Is that true? If he makes that assertion, how can he demand of me an acquiescence in his motion? Who has made France a vassal of Russia? Has England contributed to it by her refusal of the "good offices" of France? Has England contributed to it by her refusal in the first instance to accept the convention? When M. Drouyn de Lhuys opened to you the prospect of your being able to settle the Greek question in London—when the foreign minister in this country, the representative of France, told you that you might obviate all this delay in Athens by settling the question here, why did you not send immediate information to Mr. Wyse, not that the basis of the convention was settled, but that there was a prospect of an amicable arrangement? That communication by M. Drouyn de Lhuys was made so early as the 9th of April, but the noble lord says that he had no opportunity of writing to Mr. Wyse until the 19th. It is true the basis of the convention was not settled until the 15th of April, but the moment there appeared a prospect of effecting an amicable arrangement in London, you ought not to have considered expense, but having a vessel at your command, you ought instantly to have sent to Greece, and informed Mr. Wyse, knowing that under certain contingencies he was at that time authorised to employ force—what were your prospects of coming to an amicable settlement of the affair in this country, and to have advised him to abstain from resorting to force. Will the noble lord tell me why he neglected this? The noble lord says, that although he might have a steamboat at Dover and at Folkestone, yet the French had a vessel at Marseilles, and the French government could despatch their vessel on the 12th; but how could he despatch one from Dover or Folkestone, so as to reach Athens at the same time? But why did not the noble lord communicate with the French government, and say, "If it is your intention to represent to your agent at Athens that there is a prospect of an amicable arrangement of the claims of England on Greece being effected in London, perhaps you will permit me to avail myself of the same opportunity of making a similar communication to my agent?" Why did the *Vauban* sail from Marseilles without a communication from the noble lord similar in purport to that made by the French government? But the noble lord did not do it, and forcible means were resorted to. What was the consequence? You heard from the Marquess of Normanby the feeling of despair which the French government experienced the moment they heard of it. At the moment when you got that letter from the Marquess of Normanby, and were made aware of what were the feelings of the French government, why did you not frankly and honestly say to the French government, "Here has been a mistake, a misunderstanding, an unintentional delay; and to convince you that we had no intention to give you any offence, we voluntarily offer to adopt at once the original convention?" Was not that the obvious way of preventing any ill effects arising from this misapprehension, and of giving consolation to the wounded honour of France, founded perhaps on her just suspicion of your intentions? Why did you not at once yourselves tender the London convention in the place of the Greek convention? You were asked to do it; it was the demand made of you; you refused; but you were ultimately obliged to do it. A communication was made by General Lahitte to the French chamber, in which he said—"That which I insisted

on on the 20th May—that which preceded the withdrawal of the representative of France from the court of England, that in substance I have obtained, and France has accepted the proposal of Lord Palmerston.”

That was a painful communication for an Englishman to read. It might have been prevented by a frank offer to France to accept that which France offered in the first instance, and which you then refused, but subsequently conceded. I think you were right in making the concession subsequently. I blame you not for having made that concession, rather than interrupt the cordial good understanding between the two countries; but don't ask me to vote that the course you have taken is consistent with the dignity and honour of England. I do ask the noble lord at the head of the government and the noble secretary of state, if this had happened to the Earl of Aberdeen and myself—if we had received this letter from Russia—if we had seen the French minister withdrawn from this court, because we would not accede to a convention which we subsequently accepted—I ask whether if under these circumstances a vote had been proposed to the House, declaring that the course we had taken was most consistent with the dignity and honour of England—could those two noble lords have remained on their seats until I had myself, also, made that proposal to them? Well, I am not willing to provoke any censure, but I do really feel that it is utterly impossible, with any regard for the truth, to express any positive approbation of your policy, and declare that the course you have been taking is consistent with the maintenance of the honour and dignity of this country. When I see your present position with Austria, with France, and with Prussia, and when I see also the many questions that remain unsettled with the states in the north of Europe, and when, on the other hand, I know the positive advantage that it is to this country that you should be on the most friendly footing with all those powers, how can I vote that the course you have been taking is the best calculated to preserve peace? Peace, no doubt, there is. There is no disturbance; therefore, if the words in the resolution have any meaning at all, they must mean that your policy is calculated to maintain those amicable relations which ought to exist between the great powers of Europe for their separate and individual advantage. If you appeal to diplomacy, let me in the first place ask what is this diplomacy? It is a costly engine for maintaining peace. It is a remarkable instrument used by civilised nations for the purpose of preventing war. Unless it be used to appease the angry passions of individual men, to check the feelings that rise out of national resentments—unless it be used for that purpose, it is an instrument not only costly but mischievous. If then your application of diplomacy be to fester every wound, to provoke instead of soothing resentments, to place a minister in every court of Europe for the purpose, not of preventing quarrels, or of adjusting quarrels, but for the purpose of continuing an angry correspondence, and for the purpose of promoting what is supposed to be an English interest; of keeping up conflicts with the representatives of other powers, then I say, that not only is the expenditure upon this costly instrument thrown away, but this great engine, used by civilised society for the purpose of maintaining peace, is perverted into a cause of hostility and war. I have so little disposition—and I say it with truth, for the feelings which have actuated me for the last four years remain unabated—I have so little disposition, I say, for entering into any angry or hostile controversy, that I shall make no reference whatever to many of the topics which were introduced into that most able and most temperate speech, which made us proud of the man who delivered it, and in which he vindicated with becoming spirit, and with an ability worthy of his name and place, that course of conduct which he had pursued. I now come to that portion of this discussion which is a thousand times of more importance than a question as to the existence of a particular government. I now approach the consideration of the principle which the hon. and learned gentleman who brought forward this resolution proposes to be recognised and assented to by the House. The interests of a government are small in comparison with the consideration of the principles laid down by the hon. and learned gentleman. The hon. and learned member for Southampton says, this motion has reference to Greece merely. No such thing. Is this a motion to declare that whether the government be right or wrong in this individual instance, their conduct under great difficulties has been, in respect to Greece, not deserving of censure? Is that the motion? No. But you ask me to affirm and to subscribe to certain vague and indefinite principles, an explanation of which I can only collect from the speech of their able propounder. I entreat the con-

sideration of the noble lord to the declaration and opinion which I am called upon to affirm. The hon. and learned member for Sheffield says there shall be no mistake as to the purport and import of my vote. It is not a resolution simply of approval of the policy of the noble lord; but it is a resolution, the intention and meaning of which is this—"We are to tell the people of all foreign countries with whom we have any relations, that our power, so far as it is physically concerned, is not to be employed to coerce their rulers; but that, in so far as the moral influence of this country and of its government is concerned, the world shall know that we are friendly wheresoever we find a large endeavour, on the part of any body of men, to vindicate to themselves the right of self-government." The intention of this motion is, that the House of Commons shall declare openly, plainly, and without ambiguity, "We are for self-government. We are to say to the nations of the world, "We are favourable to those efforts of man by which he endeavours to raise himself in the scale of nations, and, by his own enlightenment and a confidence in his own powers, to govern himself and resist that tyranny which, under the name of legitimacy, has ever sought to crush him in all those powers which we, as Englishmen, consider to be the very birthright that nature has given us." There shall be no mistake, says the hon. and learned gentleman, as to my intentions. This declaration shall be made "openly, plainly, and without ambiguity." I am asked what is the antagonistic principle? I have been challenged over and over again to declare it. I will declare it. The principle for which I contend is antagonistic to that which has been propounded by the hon. and learned gentleman; it is the principle for which every statesman of eminence in this country for the last 50 years has contended—namely, non-interference with the domestic affairs of other countries, without some clear and undeniable necessity arising from circumstances affecting the interests of your own country. That is the antagonistic principle for which I contend. I say this, that the hon. and learned gentleman is calling upon me to affirm that principle which was contended against by Mr. Fox when it was employed in favour of arbitrary government; which was resisted by Mr. Canning, and resisted by Lord Castlereagh at the congress of Vienna, when the combined sovereigns attempted by force to check the progress of constitutional government. Now this is a matter of so grave an importance, and so far removed from those other matters which are incidentally and collaterally connected with the question, that I entreat the attention of the House. I affirm that the principle for which you contend is the principle which was asserted by the convention of France on the 19th of November, 1792. It is the principle which was afterwards abandoned by the same convention on the 13th of April, 1793, because France found it utterly impossible to adhere to it consistently with the maintenance of peace. For a certain period after the treaty of Pilnitz, after the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, which was founded on the same principle, the assertion, namely, of the right to interfere with the domestic affairs of another country—[Mr. Roebuck: Hear, hear!] Oh! I do not admit that it is right to interfere in favour of despotism and not of liberty, but I say the declarations of Austria and Prussia on the invasion of France were hostile to republican institutions—they demanded that France should restore her legitimate sovereign. We were enabled to remain at peace with France for a certain period. We declared our willingness to maintain peace with France. On the 12th of May, 1792, M. Chauvelin informed Lord Granville that—"France rejects all ideas of aggrandisement. She will preserve her limits, her liberty, her constitution, her inalienable right of reforming herself, whenever she may think proper; she will never consent that, under any relation, foreign powers should attempt to dictate, or even dare to nourish a hope of dictating laws to her. But this very pride, so natural and so just, is a sure pledge to all powers from whom she shall have received no provocation, not only of her constantly pacific disposition, but also of the respect which the French well know how to show at all times for the laws, the customs, and all forms of government of different nations. The King, indeed, wishes it to be known that he would publicly and severely disavow all those of his agents at foreign courts in peace with France, who should dare to depart an instant from that respect, either by fomenting or favouring insurrections against established order, or by interfering in any manner whatever in the interior policy of such states, under the pretence of proselytism, which, exercised in the dominions of friendly powers, would be a real violation of the law of nations."

That was the declaration of France after the revolution of 1789, the declaration

which France made to England on the 12th May, 1792, and on which Mr. Pitt relied as the ground for maintaining neutrality and even friendly relations with the new government; but on the 19th of November, 1792, France took a different course. What is the hon. and learned gentleman's resolution—that which the House of Commons are to proclaim? That—"We are favourable to those efforts of man by which he endeavours to raise himself in the nations, and, by his own enlightenment and a confidence in his own powers, to govern himself, and resist that tyranny which, under the name of legitimacy, has ever sought to crush him in all those powers which we, as Englishmen, consider to be the very birthright that nature has given us."

What was the declaration of the convention of 1792?—"The national convention declare, in the name of the French nation, that they will grant fraternity and assistance to all those people who wish to procure liberty, and they charge the executive powers to send orders to their generals to give assistance to such people as have suffered, or are now suffering, in the cause of liberty."

The national convention on the 13th of April, 1793, seeing the universal indignation excited by that proclamation, declared, in the name of the French people—"That it will not intermeddle, *qu'elle ne s'immiscera pas*, in any manner in the government of other countries, but that it will rather bury itself under its own ruins than suffer any other power to intermeddle in the interior administration of the republic, or influence the form of constitution which France wishes to establish for herself."

They withdrew the objectionable declaration of the 19th of November, because they found it excited against the French government the indignation of all independent nations. It was upon this principle that Mr. Fox denounced the declaration of the Duke of Brunswick. Mr. Fox quoted Vattel; he said he found Vattel out of favour, but he valued all those writers who had collected together the experience of ages; and it was upon the principle laid down by Vattel, of non-intervention in the affairs of other countries, that he denounced as iniquitous the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick. Then, what are we to declare? That we will relinquish the principle of non-interference, and declare in favour of the principle of self-government—that we will declare in favour of that people that "resist, under the name of legitimacy, that tyranny which has ever sought to crush him in all those powers which we, as Englishmen, consider to be the very birthright that nature has given us?" It is a most serious undertaking on the part of this House. If you do claim that right, you must give a correlative right to other powers. Self-government! Who shall construe what is the basis of self-government? We are living in the neighbourhood of a great republic—a republic which may be prosperous; which may calculate its powers—which maintains the doctrine that legitimacy is inconsistent with self-government; that monarchy is inconsistent with self-government. If I claim the right to introduce my notion of self-government into an independent nation, can I deny the right of France to introduce its notion of self-government into countries opposed to republican institutions? Recollect our manifold relations with other countries in every quarter of the globe. Recollect our position in North America. Recollect our monarchical colonies, in close contact with republicanism. American notions of self-government differ from ours. American notions of self-government probably go to the extent that there ought to be universal suffrage, and that all classes should have the right to exercise a voice in the government of their country. If I impose my notions of monarchical institutions of government on despotic countries, what right have I to remonstrate against the United States for introducing into the monarchical colonies of Great Britain in their immediate neighbourhood their republican notions of what is self-government? We are, as I said before, in the immediate neighbourhood of a great republic. Does self-government extend beyond Europe? Does this right of self-government extend beyond it? We govern millions of people in India; are we to admit the right of other powers to inculcate the right of self-government among them? Which is the wisest policy—to attempt to interfere with the institutions and measures of other countries not bordering on our own, out of an abstract love for constitutional government—or to hold that doctrine, maintained by Mr. Fox, Mr. Pitt, Lord Grenville, Mr. Canning, and Lord Castlereagh, that the true policy of this country is non-intervention in the affairs of others? Is it politic for us to go to China and attempt to intermix with

our commercial notions our notions of self-government? or are these principles confined to certain quarters of the globe?—are they limited to Europe? Can we limit them because it is convenient? or shall we instruct Dr. Bowring to read to the Chinese people at Canton, lectures on political economy—there is legitimacy there—there is not much of self-government—there is a learned professor, an enlightened political philosopher, the representative of this country; shall we invite him to instruct the people of China in their duties towards themselves—to insist on self-government? or, is it wise to live at peace with China and to make allowance for those peculiar institutions under which the people live, and with which we have no concern? I believe the latter to be by far the wiser course, the least likely to involve us in trouble and embarrassment—the best calculated to enable us to promote peace, to make commerce prosperous, and to prevent nations with whom we have commercial and international relations from entertaining jealousies of us. That I believe to be the best policy, as far as England is concerned. It is also my firm belief that you will not advance the cause of constitutional government by attempting to dictate to other nations. If you do, your intentions will be mistaken—you will rouse feelings upon which you do not calculate—you will invite opposition to government; and beware that the time does not arrive when, frightened by your own interference, you withdraw your countenance from those whom you have excited, and leave upon their minds the bitter recollection that you have betrayed them. If you succeed, I doubt whether or no the institutions that take root under your patronage will be lasting. Constitutional liberty will be best worked out by those who aspire to freedom by their own efforts. You will only overload it by your help, by your principle of interference, against which I remonstrate—against which I enter my protest—to which I to-night will be no party. You are departing from the established policy of England—you are involving yourselves in difficulties the extent of which you can hardly conceive—you are bestowing no aid on the cause of constitutional freedom, but are encouraging its advocates to look to you for aid, instead of those efforts which can alone establish it, and upon the successful exertion of which alone it can be useful. For all these reasons I give my dissent, my reluctant dissent, from the motion of the hon. and learned gentleman. I am determined to take, upon this occasion, the course which I have taken upon every other. I will not evade the difficulty by silence or absence—I will state the grounds upon which I protest against the resolution—the carrying of which, I believe, will give a false impression with respect to the dignity and honour of this country, and will establish a principle which you cannot carry into execution without imminent danger to the best interests of the country.

On a division, Mr. Roebuck's motion was carried by a majority of 46.

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This speech was the last the right hon. baronet delivered in the House of Commons—in which for the long period of forty years he held a distinguished position—his death occurring on the second of July following. The members of both Houses of Parliament, and the country generally, forgetting difference of political opinion in profound admiration of the man, joined in one universal tribute of respect to his memory, and reiterated the emphatic words of Lord John Russell—"That this country now, and posterity hereafter, in reckoning the names of eminent statesmen who have adorned the annals of our land, and contributed to its lustre, will place amongst the foremost the name of—SIR ROBERT PEEL."

THE END.

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